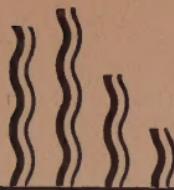


**STREAKED
WITH CRIMSON**



STREAKED WITH CRIMSON

BY CHARLES J. DUTTON

FRONT
PAGE
MYSTERIES

SECOND
SERIES



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CHAPTER I

BRINGING his car to a sudden stop, Harley Manners gazed in perplexity at the crossroads which faced him. The headlights of his car cut a long misty path of light through the darkness and came to rest upon a much battered signpost, a signpost which stood at the point where six divergent roads met.

It was not a very inviting spot in which he had stopped. Deep woods, damp and lonely, stretched away in the darkness on both sides of the car, woods which flanked the road upon which his headlights were searching. It was a lonesome place, without the slightest sound to break the silence.

The tall, well-dressed young man gave a quick look at the clock upon the dashboard to notice that it stood at ten. Digging into a pocket he found his pipe and in another pocket some loose tobacco. When the pipe was going to suit him, he stepped out of the machine to the road.

That he was practically lost he knew—and gave a half chuckle as he thought of what his classes at the University would say if they heard about it. But the University would not open until fall and by then he would have forgotten the incident. However, for the time being he was troubled.

Walking a few yards down the road, he paused below the leaning signpost. Even before he glanced upward he knew it could furnish little information. The post was aged by years of exposure, the wood rotted and half worn

away. Once a finger at the top had pointed out directions; now the letters had faded until they were illegible, faded, until only a vague figure 16 could be partly distinguished.

Puzzled, he turned to study the divergent roads. North, south, east and west they ran, with another crossing at an odd angle. Just what he ought to do and just where he might be, he did not know, nor was it possible to find out from the road map back in the machine. He was not much given to temperament, but he could not help feeling a little depressed. On every side the roads vanished into dark tunnels of gloom. The fog had been increasing for the last hour, a fog which at first clung close to the ground, but was now beginning to swirl around him in a thick gray blanket of mist. In a short time driving would prove a difficult task.

Early that morning he had left the College to drive down to the shore. It had been a long, hard year, and the invitation of his friend, George Carter, to spend a month at his summer place, could not be overlooked, the more so, when he had written that John Bartley would be with him at the same time. The young professor of Abnormal Psychology had long desired to meet the well-known criminal investigator. Crime had always been a serious study with the professor. The opportunity to meet the best-known criminal investigator in the country was something he could not pass by.

He had left his college town early in the morning. At the best he had known it would prove a long ride, and late in the afternoon he had decided to take a short cut—to leave the main highway and strike directly across the state in a straight line for the shore. And this was the

result—six diverging roads, swept by a thick blinding fog, which was becoming denser every moment.

For a few moments he stood, a lonely figure in the middle of the road, thinking. To keep on in the direction in which the car was headed seemed a rather foolish thing to do. That he was fairly close to the sea there appeared to be no doubt. The fog which pressed around him held a hint of salt in its dampness. To reach the sea, the crossroad which ran away on his left might be the best route to take. Walking back to the car he pulled open the door. With a questioning look in his eyes, the big dog which had been sleeping on the seat pressed a wet nose into his hand. A second later the car was in motion.

The road he had been on for several hours had, at one time, been paved. Long since the surface had been worn away, and no attempt had been made to fill in the holes; so the dirt road he turned upon, though narrow and rutted, was in better condition than the one upon which he had been driving. But it was a very narrow road and evidently not much used. On each side, trees crept down to a fringe of high, unkempt grass, trees, which under the strong headlights became silent, ghostly sentinels of dripping moisture, short, stunted trees, with small rambling bushes as companions.

Not only was the road narrow, but every few feet it changed its direction. Winding and twisting, it curved away before him, and he saw that his headlights were having difficulty in piercing the fog, which was now causing his windshield to mist over with a thin film of dampness.

It was necessary to drive slowly. The road curved so

sharply that he could make no speed. Besides, the surface was slippery, with little gleaming pools of water, which told of the rain that must have fallen only a few hours before.

It was a lonesome road. Even by day he judged it would have proved a gloomy ride, but at night—with the fog twisting among the trees and stretching away like a gray blanket before him—it was far from pleasant. And the fog was increasing; of that there was no doubt.

He stopped the machine for a moment to relight his pipe. The big dog at his side stirred to attention and pressed his nose against the glass. As though not liking what he saw, he gave a little moan and settled back in an uneasy, restless fashion on the seat.

In a few moments came the time when Manners had to creep along in low. The car was lost in the midst of a gray, damp world, a world without form or substance, which seemed to open as he moved along. The trees had long since vanished from his vision, hidden from sight by the thick curtain of mist. As for the road, he could only guess it was there. Strain his eyes as he would, he could not see more than a foot beyond his fenders, and the reflection of his headlights was caught up and thrown back in his eyes by the mist. All he could do was to creep along and trust to luck.

Manners was not an emotional man; his long years of study in psychology had shown him that emotions spring out of the fears and desires of men and women, but the drive was getting on his nerves and he wished it was over.

Just where he was he did not know and he spent no time in trying to think about it. There was no time for

thought. All of his attention was needed to keep the car on the road, and he doubted if he would be able to do that very long, if the fog continued. He judged that the road must be passing through a swamp. Nothing else could explain the intensity of the mist—its sudden density. There came floating through the half-open window the odor of stagnant water, heavy with the close, thick scent of decay.

Barely creeping, the car lurched its way over the slippery road. At times it would start to skid, and he would hold his breath, expecting to be in the ditch. If it had not been for the fact that he was just able to make out about two feet in front of the bumpers he knew he would not be able to drive at all.

For thirty minutes the car went on its silent way; then he was forced to stop, not because the fog had grown any more dense, but because he had come to another cross-road, which ran away on his left, a twisting shaft of gray mist in the night. Climbing out of the machine, he walked over to the intersection of the roads. There was no signboard, not the slightest thing which could tell him the way he ought to take, but he decided he would keep on as he had been going. Sometime he ought to find the seacoast—that is, if he kept on.

Going back to the car, he dropped on the running board and gave a little chuckle. As he filled his pipe again, he thought of what his friends would say if they could see him; pictured the wild unholy glee of his classes if they knew of his predicament. Then he laughed. After all, it was an experience.

All his life Harley Manners had been seeking experience. Back in the college town there were many who

wondered why the wealthy young intellectual should have taken up teaching as a profession, wondered more why he should have chosen abnormal psychology for a life work, could not understand why he did not do as so many of his class did—spend his money in play. Most people when they noticed Manners thought only of the wealth which had come to him at his father's death. Few realized that the tall young man, who found life very pleasant indeed, had a reputation that was growing in scholarly circles, that already the leading men in his field were beginning to watch his work.

Experiences were nothing new to him, but as he sat on the running board of his car, he decided that the present one had its disadvantages. The gray mist swirled about him, with a dampness which penetrated his bones, and he knew he was lost.

He had always had an uncanny sense of direction. Put him down in a strange city, give him one landmark, and he had no trouble in knowing where to go. Even the twisting alleyways of the large cities of Europe had not bothered him. But he was bothered now.

In order to save a hundred miles, he had left the usual highway, and struck directly across the state. If his speedometer was right, he could not be very far from the sea at the present moment, and, for that matter, not very far from the summer place where his friend had his estate, but there was something that troubled him—that odd feeling of depression which had been with him for the last hour.

He tried to assure himself that the fog and the dampness and the silence, which seemed to enfold him, were responsible for this feeling; but, whatever was the cause,

the fact remained; he was uneasy. To be nervous was something that did not happen to him often. However, he was nervous now, tensed and jumpy, as though expecting something to happen. By the uneasy whining of the dog by his side, he judged the Airedale must feel the same way.

Knocking the ashes from his pipe, he rose, but, before stepping into the car, cast a long slow glance around. There was nothing to be actually seen. The gray white blanket of mist was a curtain which his eyes could not pierce. Before the car, the headlights were circles of flame, yellow flame which flickered and danced as it tried in vain to pierce the fog. It was still; a silence broken only by the steady dropping of moisture from the near-by trees. An unhealthy sort of a silence, he thought, part of the depressing night, as if in some unknown manner he had been suddenly cut off from the rest of the world and left on this lonely road.

Despite himself he shuddered. All of his training told him that to feel as he did was absurd, but he could not help it. Something lay upon his heart, something which seemed to enfold him just as the fog pressed closely around the car, something sinister, with an evil warning of coming ill.

Throwing himself down upon the seat, he started the engine and again began picking his way along. It was his conviction that the road could not go on forever. He must be rather close to the shore. If he found the ocean he ought not to have much difficulty in discovering the town. But the going became even worse than before. He could not see the road except for the scant two feet before his bumpers, but it had become very narrow and

extremely rough, and from the way the car lurched and swayed from side to side he judged that the way was very little used. Then all at once what he had been afraid of—happened.

With a sickening skid, a sideway lurch, the car went off the side of the road and came to a stop. For over an hour he had been afraid this might happen, knew that if he did leave the road it might mean leaving the car in the ditch for the night. And now it had happened. With a groan he reached into the pocket of the car for a flashlight, then stepped down to the ground. He expected to discover that the rear wheels were in the ditch, but this did not prove to be the case. Instead, the road dropped away for perhaps a foot and that was all.

Though it took care, he had little difficulty in getting back on the road. He realized that the skid had come because he had allowed his mind to wander for a second, in a vain effort to analyze the vague feeling of unrest which had come upon him. From now on he must pay the closest attention to his driving.

Though the fog under the flame from his headlight still drifted like a gray silent ghost around his car, from what he saw as he gazed ahead, he had the impression that it was not quite so thick as it had been a few moments before. However, it was still much too dense to make driving a comfort.

The road suddenly began to curve again. For a few yards it would run straight, then sweep in a sudden curve, only to repeat the performance in the next few yards. Curve followed curve and the road became so narrow that the branches of the trees swept across the sides of the car. Then all at once he had a glimpse of a stone wall.

It was but a momentary glimpse, just observed for a second through the opaque mist. Then it was lost to sight. At the same moment he sensed that for some unknown reason the surface of the road had changed. No longer was it rutted and worn. Instead, it had become a smooth surface, over which his car glided without an effort.

Puzzled, Manners tried to pierce the mist with his glance. On each side of him, tall, gaunt figures of darkness, were large trees, and the trees bothered him. Only a moment before, whatever trees might have been along the side of the road had been so far away he could not see them; but he could see them now. The fog, which under his headlights was a diffused mass of soft flame, half hid them from sight, but he could distinguish enough to know that the car was passing between high towering trees, whose tops met far above his head.

He had glimpsed the wall for only a second—just the faintest sort of a vision as he slid by—and it had not looked like an ordinary stone wall. He might be wrong, but it was his impression that the wall had been carefully built, not of rocks just thrown together, but of stones chosen with care.

It bothered him. Long since he had cursed the moment when he had decided to take a short cut to the shore. He could picture the big living room of his friend, could see the walls lined with books, the easy chairs, thought of the drink he might be having at this very moment—things all in the future, because of his foolish idea of saving a hundred miles.

With a little shrug of his shoulders he reached with his free hand into his pocket for a cigarette, found one and lighted it. As his lighter leaped into flame, the dog be-

side him sat up to give an anxious glance ahead. Then suddenly the animal growled. It was a big dog, the largest Airedale in his city. A year before Manners had read of a breeder in Montana who had produced Airedales which weighed almost double what the ordinary dog did. When he read this he had bought a puppy in order to test out an experiment which had long been in his mind.

The experiments which Watson had made with animals had long interested him. From them had come a new psychology. The young professor had wished to discover how many words a dog could be taught to recognize. When the pup arrived, he took one look at him, called him Satin, and started to train him. Just what results his year of work with the animal had produced he was not quite certain. That the dog recognized over sixty words he knew. That the animal could think, he was not so sure. In a year the dog had put on sixty pounds. His size frightened most people, but there was no more gentle animal in existence, and it was this fact that caused Manners to give a little start when that deep growl rumbled forth at his side.

He was uneasy himself, and the feeling instead of decreasing had grown deeper. It was an odd feeling which he could not describe, which made him feel a little ashamed. He sensed that the dog felt as he did. For the last thirty minutes the animal had been uneasy—stirring restlessly upon the seat, rising at times to press his nose anxiously against the window.

For a second he took his hand off the wheel to ruffle the brown hair of the dog. Under his hand the animal nestled closer to him, then turned again to the window.

Again came the deep low growl, sinister and threatening. Outside in the night was something he did not like.

A little shiver of nervous fear swept over the professor. He dismissed it with the explanation that it was the fact that he was lost—lost and weary—which had caused it. But deep down in his mind he wondered if the dog also knew that they were lost. He realized that the animal ought not to be tired; he had slept all afternoon.

There was no doubt that the fog was thinning out. Already the thick heavy cloud of mist had given place to long gray drifting streamers of moisture, which drifted and twisted past the front of the car to vanish like a ghost among the tree tops.

He could make out the trees now. On each side of the road they stretched in ordered rows, trees planted in the dim past, which now towered high above his machine. Just as he had his first clear sight of the trees, the car came out on a great wide lawn, across which he could make out the dim, shadowy outline of a house, a large stone house, looming through the trees, a huge black mass in the darkness. The headlights of his car just touched one corner, and the gray stones were wet from the mist.

His hand shot out for the shift and the car came to a sudden stop. For a moment Manners gazed at the shadowy building. There was disgust in his heart, mingled with a bit of anger. In the fog he had left the road and driven into someone's estate. He was still lost, more uncertain of where he might be than ever. Then he made up his mind. It was absurd to wander around as he had been doing. There must be someone in the stone building which loomed in the darkness before him. The

best thing he could do would be to go to the house and find out just where he was. If he knew, there should be no question of his reaching Carter's in a little while.

He stepped down from the machine, pushing back the whining dog as he closed the door. For a moment he stood quietly gazing around. Across his face there fell the first drops of rain. A slight breeze swept trembling through the trees. The fog was over and a storm was coming in from the sea.

The huge yard lost itself in the darkness, a yard filled with trees, around whose trunks were deep shadows of blackness. The grass was almost waist high, and the pebbled path which the headlights reflected was strewn and littered with small twigs. All was silent, save for the faint murmur of the branches far above his head.

It was a silent, lonesome place, and, he began to think, deserted. He could not make out the house very clearly, for it was but a dim uncertain outline in the darkness, just a darker shadow against the blackness of the night; but, as he gazed at it, he thought he saw a light in one of the upper rooms. It was just the slightest flicker of a light, if a light at all. One moment he had been looking at the blackness; then for a second there had been a faint illumination which lasted but the merest space of a second; then suddenly it died away. But he was certain he had seen a light, and it meant that someone lived in the house—something he had begun to doubt.

The next second he heard a sound. It was far away, a low heavy rumble, a husky warning which came trembling through the air. It died away, only to be repeated. He knew what it was. Out on the sea, a fog

horn was sending forth its cry of warning. He could not be so very far from the shore after all.

His eyes swept back to the house. Again the uneasy feeling which had been with him all evening swept over him. He tried to throw it aside by assuring himself that it was just the racial fear of the dark which everyone has, that old heritage of the past when men feared darkness because it held danger. But the feeling persisted.

With a shrug of his shoulders he decided to go to the house and ask for directions. As he started away from the car the dog began a low whining and he had to stop and speak to the animal. The wet stones of the pebbled path crunched under his feet as he walked over them, and the tall grass whipped about his legs. With his eyes ever on the house, he reached the large piazza which extended around the front.

He had left his flashlight in the pocket of the car, but he knew as he walked up the three steps of the piazza that they were rotted with age. It was dark there and he had to fumble with his hand to find the door and the bell, an old-fashioned bell which he pulled out with a jerk. He heard the jingle of its peal within the hall, a sound which echoed and re-echoed through the house. Then he waited, with his body stiffened in attention; he was expecting something to take place, but what he did not know. Again he pulled the bell and again the long peal died away in silence. Turning, he glanced back to the yard. All was darkness, save for the bright headlights of his car, darkness broken by dim shadowy trees, silent but for the drip of water from the leaves and the far distant rumble of the fog horn.

Perhaps he waited five minutes before the unopened door. That he had seen a light in the upper story he felt sure. True, it had lasted but the merest space of a second, then, suddenly, vanished. However, there was no doubt in his mind that he had seen a light, and, if so, someone must be in the house. As he thought this again his hand reached for the bell, but no one answered. It came over him that no one was going to answer. Keeping close to the side of the house he moved down the piazza to the first window; it was covered with thick, heavy boards, and so was the second window.

The house must be deserted, but as he thought of the light he had seen he wondered. The windows were boarded; there had been no response to the bell; the house was empty, apparently, yet he had seen that light, a light which must have shown through an upper window. Someone had been in the place less than ten minutes ago—for that matter, must be there now.

Walking back to the door, he stood thinking. After all perhaps the best thing to do was to go back to where he had glimpsed the stone wall and follow the road he had been on. By accident his hand fell upon the door. As it rested upon the worn woodwork, the door swayed a little from the pressure of his hand, then started to swing open.

Startled, he whirled around, then carefully his hand reached for the knob and he gave a little push which caused the heavy door to swing slowly back. Not only was it unlocked, but it had been open a little. Though it was a heavy shadow in the darkness as he looked, he could even see it sway a little from the slight breeze. Bending forward he tried to peer within the hall, but his

eyes could distinguish nothing. Only a dark, deep pit of blackness stretched before him, a tunnel of gloom which his eyes could not pierce. For a moment he stood trying to look within, then turned and hurried from the piazza.

Though a psychologist, Manners also was a creature of instinct. Reason told him what to do: i.e., climb back into his car, turn it around and leave the yard. But his curiosity had been aroused. The house was presumed to be deserted; one might assume that from the unkempt yard, the boarded up windows, but the door was open and he had seen a light from a window. At least he was going to have a look at the hall.

The dog tried to climb past him as he opened the door of the car and fumbled for the flashlight. He had a half idea of letting the animal loose, but gave it up. With a word to the Airedale to keep still, he hastened across the path, the flashlight clutched in his hand.

Reaching the door he stepped softly into the house, going a few feet, then pausing. The darkness was intense and there was a close musty odor in the air. Just why he did not turn on his light at first he did not know. Instead he crept forward a few feet, until he stumbled against a chair. Then all at once he thought he heard a noise. It was not much of a sound. Yet, above the whisper of the breeze in the trees outside, he thought he heard a noise, a sound which he could not place very definitely, and yet which he believed must have come from overhead. But if he had heard anything it was not repeated, and at last he pressed the button of his flashlight.

With a suddenness which dazzled him, the hall sprang

into light. It was the usual long wide hallway of an old-fashioned house; a few chairs lined one side, a small hat-rack stood near the door. At the end a wide winding stairway curved up to the second floor.

One thing he noticed. As his light passed over the stand, rested upon the chairs, it revealed the thick heavy dust of many years. Even the paper upon the wall, faded with age as it was, showed cobwebs and streaks of dirt. The house was unoccupied and had been for years.

Again his eyes swept down the hall. On his left were two closed doors, but on his right a door was open. As his eyes rested upon the open doorway, again that feeling of uneasiness came creeping over him. There was something about the house, with its musty scent of age and thick dust which covered everything, that he did not like.

Irresolute, he half turned to go. After all the house contained nothing which could aid him in what he was seeking—information as to where he was. But though he did start to leave, yet after two steps he turned around again. The open door on the right of the hallway intrigued him. What was in the room, why this door should be open and the other two closed was after all none of his affair, but with a sudden resolution he walked down the hall and turned through the open door, stood just within the room as he began to throw the flame of his flashlight around.

It was a large room, once evidently used as a living room, but the furniture had all been taken away and the floor was without covering. Great beams ran across the ceiling; an immense fireplace stood cold and empty across the way. Once the room had been filled with voices, now it was silent, lonely and empty.

But there was one thing in the room, a silence which seemed heavy and filled with evil, a feeling of something perverse, which caused a shiver of dread and fear to sweep over Manners' frame. He tried to dismiss it as due to the fact that he was alone in the deserted house. And then suddenly he saw he was not alone.

The passing light had reached the center of the room, and there it trembled over an object, an object silent and calm, yet filled with evil and tragedy, an object which swayed a little as the breeze swept in through the open door, something which caused Manners' lips to tighten and his free hand to clench tight.

There in the center of the room, swaying gently at the end of a rope, was a dark object several feet above the floor, a figure which would never be distressed by the fog and the rain or the darkness of the night, a figure swaying to and fro, as the wind came through the open door, to whom neither the distant rumble of the fog horn nor anything else could mean anything.

As he gazed at it, and as the quivering flame of his flashlight swayed over the sinister figure, Manners knew why the room had been filled with evil, understood why a shiver of dread had crept over him when he entered, knew why he had shuddered.

There, in the center of the lonely room, a rope hung from one of the beams, a rope which because of the heavy object at its end swayed to and fro a little. And the object at the end of the rope was a man, a man to whom nothing in this world would ever matter—a silent man, swinging at the end of a rope, with his shoes two feet above the dingy floor.

CHAPTER II

FOR a moment, stricken cold with dread, Manners was unable to move. The flashlight in his trembling hand cast a yellow flickering flame down the length of the swaying body. There was nothing dignified nor majestic about it, only a sense of horror and evil perverseness, a spirit which filled the dark silent room with a feeling of abhorrence.

Slowly he forced his unwilling gaze to travel to the rope which was cast about the beam, a black rope, soiled and faded with age, which had evidently been used many times. But there was one odd thing about the rope. Dark with age it might be, yet every few feet it was splotched with red, as though someone had taken a brush and dipped it into red paint and had splashed it upon the rope in a nervous rage.

Suddenly the feeling of nervousness died away. He became the cool, analytical psychologist that he was. His lips tightened as he hastened over the floor. The sinister object in the empty room might be a man who had committed suicide, but it was necessary to discover if he was dead. Though he did not like to do it, his hand went forth to touch the still face. When he drew it away he knew the world had ended for the silent figure; but he decided that death had taken place within the last hour. There was still a feeling of warmth about the body. Then he noticed something else.

His first impression had been that he had stumbled

upon a suicide. He knew that people who take their own lives often select lonely and deserted places in which to die. But he began to wonder if this could be a suicide.

The room was empty, a great desolate space of drabness. Sweeping the flashlight along each side, he could find no trace of a chair. There was not a single bit of furniture in the room. His eyes came back again to the rope. It had been flung over one of the four great beams which crossed the room—a little below the oak ceiling. The shoes of the dead man were at least two feet from the floor. For a second he stared at them thinking.

To have committed suicide the man must have stood on something before he took his fatal leap. But there was nothing in the room upon which he could have stood. Only two possibilities remained. Either someone had been in the house before he discovered the body; someone who had moved either a chair or a box, or else—he gave a start at the thought—the man had been murdered.

The thought seemed incredible. He knew his crime literature as few men did, knew the stories of the odd and famous crimes all over the world, and hanging was not the method the average murderer ever used. In fact, Manners decided that he had never heard of a person being murdered in that fashion.

Yet before him, with his head twisted to one side in an uncanny fashion, hung a man at the end of a rope. How he could have placed the rope around his neck and then hung himself, Manners could not comprehend. He would have to have something from which to jump, but there was nothing within the room he could have stood upon.

Suicide seemed impossible. But if it was murder there were still facts which needed explanation. Could it have

been committed within the room? How had the murderer brought his victim to the deserted house? A hundred conflicting questions crowded through his brain, but realizing that he could not answer them he again studied the body.

The gray suit was one of exquisite texture, and no cheap tailor had ever fashioned it. The glimpse of the shirt showed that it was made of expensive material. There was even a small but perfect opal showing in an unobtrusive manner in the dark red tie. There was no doubt from the clothing that the still figure was that of a man to whom wealth was not unknown.

His slow glance searched the tortured face. It was not a pleasant sight. Upon the still features there was a look of agony, and with it an expression of startled horror and surprise, as though what had happened had come suddenly and without warning; but in life the man must have been good looking. The short cropped black mustache etched a dark line above lips now twisted in agony. A rather intelligent face, Manners thought, that of a man who could not have been more than forty, a man used to the good things of life.

For a while he studied the still features, then glanced down to look at the hands. Hands, he knew, told more about an individual than any other part of the body. For a second his eyes went searching down the body—then he gave a start. The hands were tied behind the man's back. A heavy string was wound tightly around the wrists, string, which by the position of the clenched fingers, the dead man had tried in vain to reach. They were soft, delicate hands, well cared for, the hands of a man who had never done any hard work.

As he saw this, Manners knew what he must do. There was no doubt that the man had been murdered. It was his duty to reach the police as soon as he could. He must be near the town and, because of the great wealth the summer people represented, there would be a good police force there.

With one backward look at the sinister thing hanging from the beam, he walked hurriedly out of the room. In a second he had reached the door, pausing to throw a look back at the hall. The winding stairway at the end, curving to the second floor, invited him to search the upper part of the house, but he decided it could do no good. He was unarmed and the battery of his flashlight was almost run down. Long before he had gone through the upper rooms he would be in darkness.

When he stepped out on the piazza it was to discover the fog had vanished. A slight rain had taken its place and the wind was rising. Down in the dark yard he could hear the branches of the trees as they moved in the breeze. The fog horn no longer rumbled forth its warning.

The dog greeted him with little whines of gladness as he climbed into his seat. With his foot on the starter he glanced soberly back at the house. One corner was thrown into relief by the headlights; the rest was but a huge black shadow. He shivered as he thought of what was within.

When he reached the stone wall he saw how he had managed to get off the road. The highway took a sudden curve just beyond the wall and in the fog he had simply driven straight ahead. He shook his head as he saw this, realizing that had it not been for his mistake no

one might have discovered the crime that had been committed.

For a few moments he tried to run over in his mind what had happened. In the end he dismissed the attempt for something else. There was one odd circumstance which he had noticed, something more remarkable even than the manner in which the man had been murdered—for he had made up his mind it was murder—but what the odd circumstance was he could not recall. There was an uneasy feeling that one thing he had seen was more remarkable than anything else, but what it was he could not remember.

Being a psychologist he did not try to force his memory. Instead he gave his attention to his driving. Sooner or later the odd circumstance now hidden in his subconscious would take its proper place in his memory.

The road was becoming wider. After driving a little over a mile he passed a house, then another. As he swept past the second house he saw far down the road the reflection of a street light. His long drive was almost over.

The car bumped off the dirt highway to come upon a wide concrete road. Far ahead in the darkness could be seen the lights of the town. In a moment he knew where he was and at the same instant the missing fact leaped into his mind: What did the red marks on the rope mean?

Of all the weird circumstances surrounding the dead man the red splotches upon the rope were the oddest. It was not a new rope; in fact it was black from use and age; but every few inches a bright, fresh splotch of red had been smeared across it. He tried to figure out what it might mean. There was little doubt in his mind that the splotches had been new paint, he judged, dashed

against the rope not very long before it had been used for its sinister purpose. But what could they mean? He did not know.

The car was passing by large estates. High privet hedges hid the houses from the road. They were large houses, set far back from the road, in the midst of wide spacious lawns, houses that spoke of wealth—the homes of the summer colony. As he slid by the open driveways he could catch a flashing view of trees and small gardens. From many of the houses light still streamed forth in the night. Though it was nearly midnight the summer resort had not yet gone to bed.

Suddenly the road curved and began to follow a high sea wall. Then came the first glimpse of the ocean, a black, rolling mass of water on his right. Far in the distance came a flash of light from a lighthouse; a glare lasting thirty seconds then dying away, only to be repeated. A mile or so from the shore were the lights of a passing steamer, the portholes little circles of brightness in the darkness. The rumble of the surf floated into the car as it pounded into a glitter of spray against the sea wall. A few drops of rain dashed against the windshield, but the fog was gone and he doubted if it would rain very long. Already a few stars were trying to peer through the broken clouds.

What he should do was a bit of a problem. The police ought to be notified at once. On the other hand Carter had been expecting him for hours. He would reach Carter's house before he entered the town. It would be absurd to drive past. Then again, Carter would be able to do more with the police than he. He realized that it was a weird and rather unbelievable story he had to tell.

Everyone at the summer resort knew his friend. As he thought of this, he concluded to allow Carter to call the police.

The road had left the sea wall to run again through large estates. He could glimpse the high hedges, see the trees which hid the houses. In a few moments he would be getting out of the car and he knew that he would not be sorry. The road curved once more to become much wider. He remembered his instructions: "When the road doubles in width about a mile from the town, my place will be the first one on your right." In a moment he saw the high hedge, the black, dim shadow of a house, then the open driveway.

The house he stopped before was set in the midst of a wide lawn and was covered with roses. From the lower windows light was streaming forth into the night, light which cut a silver path across the close cropped grass and reflected the spray dashing over a sea wall at the end of the lawn.

Even before he could cut off the engine he saw the front door open. In the bright light the figure of his friend was thrown into strong relief, a blond haired young man dressed in a rather wonderful light suit. For a second he stood gazing at the car then with a shout started down the steps.

There were many people who smiled a little when they heard Carter's name mentioned. He spent far too much care upon his clothes, and was, they thought, rather irresponsible—a young man who had much more money than he needed and who never did any serious thinking about anything. But there were a few who knew that this opinion was erroneous, a very few who knew that the

head of the Secret Service department counted the blond haired young man as one of the best men in his department, gave him that rank because of the keenness of his brain, his uncanny habit of getting results.

The two men met by the side of the car and Carter's arm went around the shoulders of his friend in a happy pressure. Then, saying something about his man bringing in the bags, they started for the house. At their heels followed the Airedale.

Through a wide hall they passed and into a large living room. After the fog and the darkness, the brightly lighted room, with its well filled book cases, the gay prints on the walls, was a cheerful sight. With a weary sigh Manners dropped into the easy chair before the fireplace—even if it was July, logs were spluttering at his feet.

The dog walked gravely over to his side to stand looking down at the fire. It was the largest Airedale Carter had ever seen. For a moment he studied the huge animal, took in the breadth of chest, noticed the finely shaped head. There was an amused tone in his voice as he commented:

“And this thing is what you called a pup in your letter.”

Manners made no reply to the laughing voice. For several hours he had been driving with every nerve at attention. For the moment he could relax and he suddenly felt very tired, not only tired, but exhausted. Leaning his head back in the chair he gave a long sigh. It was the sigh that caused Carter to give a quick glance at his friend. Manners was leaning back against the chair with his eyes closed. Carter saw that the drive had been a hard one, sensed something else, a certain air

of nervousness in the man he had always presumed was without nerves.

For a moment he studied him and noticed that there were lines of fatigue about the fine lips, lines which should not be there. He appeared to be exhausted, not only physically but mentally. Something was wrong he felt sure. It was not like Manners to drop down into a chair and not break forth at once in a stream of conversation.

He went from the room and was absent a few moments. When he returned, a tray was in his hand, a tray with a pinchbeck bottle and two glasses which tingled with a pleasing sound as he walked across the floor. He returned to find Manners standing with his back to the fireplace. The two men drank their high-ball in silence. After placing the glasses on the table Carter sank down in a chair and lighted a cigarette. Manners had something to tell him he knew and in his own good time would speak.

Standing before the fireplace the tall professor gazed down at his blond haired friend. It was a friendly happy face which smiled back at him, the face of one well pleased with life, gratified that his friend was with him.

And then Manners began to tell him the story of his ride. In short, vivid sentences, he pictured the fog-swept road, the lonely drive, the dark deserted house. He had a gift of words, the power of graphic description. His voice shook a little when he came to speak of what he had seen in the darkened room.

Leaning back in his chair Carter had watched the eager speaker with a little smile of amusement playing across his lips. He knew Manners from long years of friendship; to see him warm into enthusiasm was nothing new,

but the smile soon left his lips. When the story was ended, Carter had dropped his cigarette in the tray and was sitting upright in his chair. It was an incredible story, he thought, and but for the tone of horror which trembled in Manners' voice he would have doubted if it were true. But it needed only a look at the grave face which stared down at him to know that his friend was not fooling.

The description of the house puzzled him a little. Though he had a summer home at the resort yet he was not very familiar with the surrounding country. This was the first year he had ever spent more than a few days at his place, and he was far too indolent during his vacation to do any driving.

However, the house ought not to be very hard to find. With a sad look at Manners he rose to his feet. There was but one thing to do. By the door he paused and the look he gave his friend was a long one of mingled amusement and regret.

"I suppose I have to believe you, Harley," he said, "and it means calling up the chief of police. I think I had better have him come here and you can tell your story over again."

He left the room to vanish out in the hall. Left to himself, Manners walked over to the table and poured a small drink into his glass. Though he was tired he knew he would have to go back with the chief to the house. It was midnight now, and when he would ever get to bed was a problem. He felt he needed sleep.

With the glass in his hand he wandered around the room, stopping once in a while to glance at the colored prints with which the walls were lined. They were

mostly of the eighteenth century of France, gay colored prints, the gallante work of Boucher, Denon, Fragonard and Watteau, prints reflecting an age long past.

Bookcases lined the walls. He knew what they contained—the collection Carter had made of volumes dealing with the sea. Stories of pirates and buccaneers, of ancient navigators and early explorers, filled the many shelves to overflowing—books which Carter had read again and again.

It was a pleasant room, filled with color and warmth. The fire in the fireplace had been made from seadrift. It sparkled in little spluttering flames, which changed in color from red to green, then glowed with a deep yellow.

Taking a random book from the nearest case he walked over to a chair by the desk. It was an old volume, the black woodcuts quaint and curious. Just as he was about to look at the title Carter returned to the room.

He took the chair across the table, turning it so he could glance at Manners. After a little shake of his head he lighted a cigarette. Watching the first smoke ring drift to the ceiling he turned to give a glance at the window. Then he spoke:

“It’s my belief, Harley, that I got the chief out of bed.” There came a chuckle from his lips. “The old boy is a bit profane at times. You know that the summer people got together a year ago and decided that the town must have efficient police protection. We managed to persuade James Rogan to leave the New York police force and take the job. What I told him over the phone caused him to break out in rather violent language.”

For a moment Carter smiled as he thought of the amazed, rasping voice of the chief when he answered the

telephone. Then the smile vanished to be replaced by a keen questioning glance thrown across the table.

"Are you sure, Harley," he queried, "that the man did not commit suicide?"

"How could he?" was the quick reply. "How can a man hang himself without having a thing in the room to jump from? And that room was empty, not a single stick of furniture of any kind."

Carter's blond head nodded assent. Manners' story had puzzled him. Search his mind as he would, the description of the dead man did not fit anyone he knew. But then, after all, there were a good many of the town people with whom he was unacquainted, and, for some reason, he was of the opinion that the silent figure in the empty room would not prove to be someone from the town.

It was a strange crime, if it were a crime, but he decided it must be murder. Manners had insisted that suicide was out of the question. Why the deserted house should have been chosen for the deed was beyond his understanding. He turned again to Manners.

"You did not notice anything out of the ordinary, did you?"

The recollection of the sound which had come drifting down from the upper story flashed into Manners' mind. It had been just a suggestion of a noise; perhaps it was nothing more than the wind in the trees. One thing was certain, it had not been repeated. Mentioning it, he added that he was not positive he had heard anything. It might have been his nerves or the wind playing around the house. But deep down in his mind he knew he had not been mistaken. He had heard a sound.

"Harley, if it's murder—"

"If it is murder—" came back the disgusted retort. "How can a man tie his own hands behind his back and commit suicide by hanging, with nothing to jump from?"

Carter laughed and then became serious.

"I agree with you. But there is something we want to remember. The man was murdered, by hanging. Now no person is going to submit to having his hands tied and a rope put around his neck without a struggle. Even if that is done you have another problem. The man would weigh a good deal. Whoever strung him up must have used something to swing him from. And you say there was nothing in that room. Perhaps he was killed somewhere else."

Manners nodded. He had thought of that, had wondered if the man had been alive when the rope had been placed around his neck. He had made no examination of the body, simply had assumed that death had come from hanging. But he did not know. Then he thought of what appeared to him the oddest part of all.

"George, the rope I saw was black with dirt, it could not have been so very old to support his weight, but there was one queer thing about it—every few inches a daub of red paint, fresh paint, had been smeared on it. I can't explain that."

Raising his eyebrows Carter half started to speak just as there came a long drawn out ringing of the door bell. Throwing out his hands in an expressive gesture he rose from his chair to hasten out into the hall. Manners heard the door open; the sound of voices drifted to his ears. The next moment Carter re-entered the room. He was

not alone. Close by his side walked a heavy, thick-set man of around sixty. The face, surmounted by snowy hair, was stern, flushed red from the open air. There was an air of authority about the thick-set figure, and Manners could tell by the way he walked that he belonged to the police. Behind him a much younger man threw a curious glance around the room, his eyes finally resting on the bottle on the desk.

Manners rose as the white haired man was introduced to him as the chief of the police, rose to receive a quick searching glance as the heavy voice boomed out:

"Are you the person who gets me out of bed at this hour of the night with as wild a yarn as I ever heard?"

Manners simply nodded. He could tell there was some doubt in the chief's mind as to the truth of the story he had heard over the telephone. The look he had received had expressed both doubt and a little irritation at being called out of bed. But he did not blame the chief for that.

Carter excused himself for a second to hurry from the room. When he returned two more glasses joined those on the tray and after they had been filled the drink was taken in silence. Placing his glass back on the tray the chief turned to Manners. His voice was crisp, his eyes keen.

"Now suppose you tell me just what you saw."

The story was retold in detail. No one interrupted him, no one spoke, until he was quite finished. As his voice died away, Rogan threw a questioning look at Carter. The eyes of the two met and the chief spoke again.

"I guess we will have to go out there and look into it.

It sounds rather queer. I know the place. It's the old Wilson house. No one has lived there they tell me for fifteen years."

With a shrug of his shoulders Carter suggested they had better take his big car. Manners was tired and the chief had come out from town in a small coupé. Agreeing to this, they left the house, leaving the dog dozing before the fire.

Manners observed that his car had been taken to the garage. The rain had ended and a warm wind was sweeping in from the sea. The surf still pounded against the breakwater, its heavy rumble never ceasing. Through the trees he could glimpse the lights of a passing boat, some miles from the shore. He was tired and as he sank back in the rear seat of the big automobile he was very glad someone else was to do the driving. Leaning against the cushions he closed his eyes for a moment. The voices of Carter and the chief talking in front came to his ears. He felt the officer at his side stir uneasily. Then he remembered nothing more until he felt someone shaking him.

With a start he opened his eyes. The car was no longer in motion and Carter's laughing face was gazing down upon him. With a sheepish grin he rose and stepped from the machine down to the darkness of the great yard, where his headlights had first rested upon the stone house.

With an involuntary shudder he turned to gaze at the house. The car had been stopped in such a position that the searching glare from the headlights rested directly upon the front door, which he saw he had failed to close as he hastened from the hall.

Above their heads stretched the arching trees, a faint murmur swept through the branches, but save for the faint breeze there was no other sound. Lonely and deserted the dim yard lost itself in the darkness, a blackness which the eyes could not penetrate.

Instinctively the four men came close together as they walked toward the house. Across the littered grass they went, then up three steps which creaked with age. By the half opened door they paused for a second. It was the chief who pushed the door wide open. They gave an eager look down the hall. For a second there was nothing to be seen; only a dark pit of gloom met their eyes; then the darkness was split by the powerful flashlight which Carter had brought from his car.

Just what each man had expected to see might have been hard to discover, but from the watchful glance they cast at the hall, the searching way their eyes went to the stairway at the end of the passage, it was evident that they expected something. The eyes of the chief went to Manners, and their glance held. With a slight nod Manners stepped into the lead and walked into the house. Half way down the hall he hesitated a second, pausing before the open door which led to a dark room. The flashlight began to sweep over the dingy floor as he stepped within.

Only an hour before he had stood there. He could still remember the cold feeling of horror which had swept over him. He would never forget that. Nor would he ever forget the ghastly object which he had seen swaying at the end of the black rope, the rope streaked with vivid spots. He wished he did not have to see it again, but as the flashlight swept across the room, he gave one look.

He knew what he would see, dreaded the sight. The dark object, silent and still, dangling at the end of the rope, he would never forget, that figure which once had been a man.

He raised his eyes and then gave a start, as a cry broke from his lips. For a second he believed he had not seen aright. The room was empty. There was not a stick of furniture upon the floor, no pictures looked down from the walls, but the ghastly figure which had caused his blood to run cold was no longer in the room. The room was empty. The sinister object at the end of the black rope—was gone.

CHAPTER III

STARTLED into a dazed silence he gazed blankly at the heavy beam above his head. Dark with age it ran across the room just below the oak ceiling. But the black rope streaked with crimson was gone. The awful figure whose presence had filled the room with malignant horror had vanished.

He turned his bewildered face towards the three men standing in silence just behind him. There was an amused smile upon Carter's lips, a little twinkle playing in his eyes, but the red face of the chief had flushed a deeper crimson while his eyes were beginning to show an angry gleam. With a half oath his voice started to splutter:

"If I did not know Carter and if he had not told me you are a rather big man in your line I would say you could qualify as the biggest liar I ever knew."

"Not so fast, Rogan," broke in Carter. "If you will just give a look above your head, you will see where the rope Manners spoke of has been cut off just below the edge of the beam."

The flashlight turned its yellow light upwards. The ray of light played over the surface of the beam almost directly above their heads. There, a dark line against the wood, was a piece of rope, a black rope with two vivid red spots showing, a rope cut away just below a thick knot.

"It's my impression," came Carter's drawling voice, "that we agree that, of course, Manners' story was true.

That bit of rope clinches it. And it must be that whoever committed the murder was in the house when Harley entered. That explains the noise he heard. And, after he went away, they removed the body."

There came a half grunt from the chief. His eyes went searching to the ceiling then slowly swept around the room. Then he spoke, his voice gruff:

"Guess you are right, Carter, but it looks to me as though whoever cut that rope did so either because they were unable to untie the knot or because they did not dare wait. And that beam is about twelve feet from the floor. How did they reach it?"

There was no reply, for the moment none of them had a suggestion to offer. There was no furniture in the room. Even if there had been a chair, one would not have been able to reach the beam. Yet the rope had been tied around it and a piece of it was still there.

Manners thought of something. Not only would a person have to stand upon some object to reach the beam, but there was also the problem of the dead man. It was his impression that the man had been either dead or unconscious before the rope was placed around his neck. The man had weighed somewhere around a hundred and forty pounds. The rope had been placed around his neck and his body had been suspended from the beam. But how had it been done? Upon what had the man rested before he was swung off into eternity? That was the problem.

As though reading his thoughts there came Carter's voice:

"It must have been quite a job to hang that man. The murderer had to stand upon something. Though he could

have used a chair as a place on which to rest the body, yet he could not have reached the beam to tie the rope around it by standing on a chair. A ladder must have been used.

"And it must be outside somewhere," was the chief's remark. "To cut the rope and remove the body took time, and whoever did it only had about an hour. We had better give a look at the yard."

Out of the room they hastened down the hall to the front door. Someone thrust a small flashlight into Manners' hand. As he came into the hall he paused. His eyes passed down the row of chairs standing against the wall; noticed the old-fashioned hatrack. The glance showed him they had not been moved since he first observed them. Besides they were covered with dust, the undisturbed dust of years. No one had touched them.

Out in the silence of the yard he discovered the other men were already vanishing around the side of the house. For a moment he stood still. The strong lights from the car cut a shaft through the darkness throwing its flame into the hallway he had just left. It was a bizarre, unusual crime. He had no doubt now that the faint noise he had heard when he first entered the house had been caused by the person who had removed the body. But why should one who was willing to commit a murder try to hide the body? The more so after they knew that the crime had been discovered.

An idea came to him. The dead man must be someone who was well known. Someone was perfectly willing to hang a man but did not wish the identity of his victim to be discovered. But for the fact that he had stumbled upon the deserted house by driving off the highway the

murder might not have been discovered for weeks. That explained why, after he had driven away, the murderer had come out of his hiding place and hastily removed the body. The dead man must be someone known to the chief, perhaps even known to Carter.

The voices of the three men came faintly drifting from the side of the house. They were coming back to the piazza. He could see their light as it advanced over the tall grass. In a moment they were in sight, and he saw that the chief's assistant was carrying a ladder. As they hastened up the steps he was informed the ladder had been found towards the rear of the house. Someone had used it, for there were traces of dirt upon the rungs. It was a small ladder, not over fifteen feet long, and almost new.

It was the chief who placed the ladder upon the floor and climbed in a clumsy fashion to the beam above. They saw him examine the knotted bit of rope and watched him take a knife from his pocket. Instead of untying the knot he cut the rope just below the beam.

Back on the floor they crowded around his outstretched hand. In his palm lay the piece of rope, a rather heavy bit of rope, which Manners now saw was black, not from age, but because it had been dipped in pitch. But across the black surface were red streaks—splotches of red paint—blood-like in appearance.

Carter's finger pointed to the knot. The chief nodded understandingly.

"I can see why anyone who thought they were pressed for time cut that rope instead of untying that knot," he said, "whoever did it knew what they were doing."

The rope vanished into the chief's pocket. As it dis-

appeared he reminded them they must give a look at the upper floor, not that he expected that anything would be found, but it had to be done. It was his opinion it would be many a day before they knew very much about the affair.

At the top of the stairway they found themselves facing a hall similar to the one below. A long hall with four doors on each side. All the doors were closed. Instinctively as they threw the flame of the flashlight down the length of the hall they paused and listened, but there was not a sound.

They took each room in order, starting with the first on their right. The doors were all unlocked and apparently had not been opened in years. The floors were thick with dust, the windows covered with cobwebs. There was no furniture and the cupboards when opened revealed nothing. From room to room they went. The result was always the same. Thick heavy dust lay upon the floors, the paper upon the walls was streaked with dirt. One thing was certain, these rooms had not been opened. Years must have passed since anyone had walked across their dingy creaking floors.

It was Carter who opened the door of the eighth room and gave a hasty flicker of the flashlight within. It was a perfunctory gesture for he expected to see what had been disclosed in the other rooms—a dusty, vacant floor without a single bit of furniture—but as his eyes followed the light he gave a long low whistle of surprise.

This room was furnished. A bright rug lay upon the floor. There was a stand near the window. Upon its surface lay two magazines and a little vase which contained a bunch of roses, roses which had been fresh only a few

hours before. Three chairs and a small couch completed the furniture.

There was a puzzled expression upon Carter's face as he turned to the three men. After examining the other rooms and finding them empty no one had expected to discover what this room disclosed. Not only was the room furnished but it gave every indication of having been used and not very long ago.

Someone, thought Manners, placed those roses in that vase not over twenty-four hours ago. His eyes went to the couch; traveled from there to the stand. He did not have to cross the room to know what the magazines were. Everyone who did any reading could recognize the covers. One a vivid red, the other a deep green. He knew the type of people who read both; their appeal could only be to a rather sophisticated, intellectual group.

"Humph," growled the chief. "Here is another mystery. This place, they tell me, has been deserted for over fifteen years. When General Wilson died it was closed up and all the furniture taken out except those chairs in the hall below. Now we find this."

He threw out his hands in an expressive gesture. Not only was the chief puzzled, but it had dawned upon him that he was facing a crime as mysterious as any he had known during his long years on the New York police force, a crime which would take all the skill, all the knowledge he could command, to solve.

As he thought of this he cast a hurried glance at the two men who stood near him. Carter, he knew, had a reputation in the Secret Service. To look at his expensive light suit, the rather startling tie, might cause one to won-

der if he ever had a serious thought. But the chief decided he would need all the aid Carter could give.

The other young man he knew nothing about. He liked his face, it showed a sense of humor and intelligence. Carter had said his friend was a rather well known professor. Just what it was he taught, the chief did not remember, something that required a great deal of knowledge he felt sure. He was glad they were both there to aid him. He knew he would need their help before he was through.

The furnished room puzzled him. Why the couch and the chairs should be there was a fact he would have given a great deal to understand. Someone had been using the place, of that there was no doubt. With a glance at the roses he wondered if it had been a secret rendezvous.

Hesitating a second he turned to Carter. There was a doubtful tone in his voice:

"It's pretty dark outside, but we better have a look around the yard. Of course I will have to come back in the morning, but from the looks of this room someone has been using this house, and not so long ago. We might be able to discover when we get outside if there are any cars here."

As they started to leave the room the chief suggested that Manners might stay behind and make a careful examination. It would save time, as it was rather late. With a slight nod the suggestion was accepted, and there came the sound of their noisy footsteps going down the stairs.

Left alone with the small flashlight in his hand, Manners again let his eyes fall upon the roses. To discover

that the room was furnished had been a surprise, but the roses seemed out of place, unless they had been placed in the vase in an effort to give a little charm to the room.

And if that were so then it must mean a woman. No man would have bothered to do that, unless he was trying to add a bit of color to the room, because he was expecting someone to meet him there. To his mind, the roses suggested a woman, but there was nothing else that did.

Though he searched the room he could discover not the slightest thing. The magazines were picked up and shaken in the vain hope that a note might come falling out. But the hope was not realized. A look at the covers told him they were current issues, out only five days. Whoever had brought them to the room had done so within the week. But they did give him a hint as to the type of person who had been there. Their contents called for a rather sophisticated viewpoint, a certain kind of mental philosophy. Perhaps it might even prove what the chief would call a clue, but if so it was a slight one.

Going to the window he tried to look down into the yard. It was rather difficult, for the shutters were tightly closed, but through a crack he could catch the flicker of a light upon the lawn. His friends were down there searching over the ground.

And then suddenly he heard a noise which caused him to stiffen to attention and stand with every nerve tense. It was a slight sound, but he knew he had heard it, as if, over his head, someone creeping along the floor had stumbled upon some object. Bending forward, he listened eagerly. It was not repeated, but he had heard it, and he knew it came from above his head. His eyes

searched the ceiling, which was stained with streaks of dirt and whose plaster showed great gaping cracks.

Stepping to the door he glanced up and down the hall, then he hastened in the direction of the stairway, the stairway they had come up but had not looked behind. From the doorway of the furnished room his flashlight had revealed a door which they had not opened.

The sound had come from above. He realized that he had no weapon, but this did not bother him. There must be an attic above the floor he was on. If there was, he had the idea someone might be hiding there, and he intended to find out if this were so.

It was a small door he stood before. His hand reached out for the doorknob, then he hesitated. It might be an absurd thing to do. Perhaps he had better hurry down to the yard and tell the others what he had heard. One thing stopped his doing this. Whoever was above must have heard the three men as they went down the winding stairway. They had been rather noisy. No doubt if there was anyone above him he had the idea that everyone had left the house.

Manners slipped the catch of his light and the hall became dark, a deep intense darkness in which he could not even distinguish the walls. Slowly his fingers searched for the knob, found it, and carefully opened the door. Inch by inch he drew it wider—then stood listening.

For a while he could make out nothing. Then, as his eyes became more accustomed to the gloom, he could see the faint shadowy outlines of the steps, which lost themselves above his head in the darkness into which they vanished. There was a stairway which led to the attic.

He listened for a while but no sound floated down to his eager ears. Softly he stepped through the door to stand at the foot of the first step. An upward glance showed that it was a little lighter overhead, though not much.

Carefully he placed his foot on the first step, then started to creep slowly upward. At every step he would pause for a second and listen. Just what he expected to hear he could not tell. But though he waited with every nerve at attention, nothing broke the silence. Whoever was above was not moving about.

Foot by foot he crept slowly upward, until his head was on a level with the attic floor. Then he heard the sound again. When he heard it he knew he had been right, there was someone in the attic and not very far away. It had been a peculiar noise, a rasping, scraping sound, as though someone was opening or closing a window. Though it was hard to place in the darkness, he judged it had come from halfway across the floor.

Again he hesitated. He knew the wisest thing to do would be to hurry down to the lawn and seek help. But something drove him on. Slipping his hand into a pocket his fingers closed around the end of his flashlight. If he should need a weapon it would have to be his defense.

Lifting his head above the floor he gave a quick hurried glance into the darkness. It was dark under the roof, but there seemed to be a window open somewhere which allowed the night air to enter. He could feel the cool current sweep through the musty space, but he could see very little. In the center of the floor, a black mass against the dimness, was a shadowy outline running up to the roof, the chimney, he judged. Above his head, a

little in front of the chimney, was a square opening, which he knew was a skylight. He could barely make it out, a square outline against the dim roof. A ladder ran up from the floor, its base lost in the darkness, but the top was a shadow of sketchy lines as it reached the roof. The floor appeared to be empty, though there were several places where he thought he could distinguish boxes.

With his eyes peering at the skylight he waited. Just what he was waiting for he could not tell. But though the moments dragged slowly along, the sound was not repeated. Again his head crept above the floor as his eyes searched vainly through the musty gloom.

With a sudden resolution he climbed up the remaining step. Listening a second, he then stood upright on the attic floor. If he had expected anything to happen he was gladly disappointed. Except for the little shuffle made by his feet as he stepped upon the floor there was nothing to break the silence. Puzzled, he stood with his eyes trying to search every corner of the attic. Dark pits of gloom they were, where, if a person was crouched against the wall they could not be seen. Then he started across the floor.

The roof was flat. No beams came down to the floors. On every inch of the floor a man could stand upright. Past the shadowy chimney he went, until he stood pressed close against the opposite wall. Then his fingers loosened the catch of the light. He kept the flame against the wall, searching out the dark corners. The floor was dusty, covered with the dirt of years. But that was all. The corners of the room did not contain even a box, to say nothing of the hiding figure of a man. There was no one save himself in the attic.

Yet someone had been there. Of that he was positive. There was only one way he judged by which one could get down to the other floor, that was by the steps upon which he had been crouching. No one had gone that way, yet, whoever had been in the attic had vanished.

He walked across the floor to the chimney until he stood in its shadow. It was a huge chimney, and he judged the only one the house had, a massive pile of bricks, which felt cold and rough as he touched them. Here he stood thinking. His eyes rested on the ladder several feet away. Following its length his gaze rested upon the skylight. Again he observed that the skylight was open, above his head he could look through the square opening at the sky, in which one star could be seen.

But the open skylight gave him the answer to his problem. He knew now how the person he had heard had vanished from the attic. Why he should have gone out on the roof was something Manners could not understand, but he was going to find out. Hastening from behind the chimney his hand reached out for the ladder. As he stepped on the first rung, it swayed a little under his weight, but he thought it was sound though it did creak with age.

Above his head was the square of light. The first hint of dawn was coming into the sky, and a cool breeze was sweeping across his face. Rung by rung he climbed upward until his fingers clasped the roof. Then with a quick jerk he drew himself through the opening.

As he stumbled upright he realized that the roof was slippery from the fog and rain. Out in the yard, the trees loomed high above the house, their branches sway-

ing a little in the breeze. Overhead, the darkness of the night would shortly vanish before the coming dawn. Even as he looked there came the sleepy call of some waking bird. Only a few feet away from him loomed the dark squatly outline of the chimney. But nothing else broke the flat outline of the roof. Slippery from the rain and the mist, it lost itself in the darkness.

His eyes came back to the chimney. If anyone had come on the roof, there was only one place where he could not be observed—behind the dark chimney which broke the square outline of the roof. Manners hesitated a second. Though dawn was on the way, yet it was still dark. The trees beyond the roof were but vague outlines against the sky; objects were hard to distinguish; outlines a blur of shadowy lines. But after a moment he started towards the chimney. He had decided that whoever had been in the attic must have climbed out on the roof, then disappeared. It was his impression that there was some sort of an ell to the house, that some few feet below the roof he was on was another roof. Nothing would be more natural than that anyone wishing to avoid detection should come upon the main roof then perhaps drop to the ell and vanish into the night.

Thinking this he came in front of the chimney and started around its side. Then suddenly he heard the sound of moving feet. As he started back a dim shadow leaped from the darkness and sprang toward him, the vague figure of a man.

So unexpected was the attack that his first involuntary movement had been to take a step backward. As the rushing figure leaped at him he was taken off his guard. He felt the long muscular arms go clasping around his

waist, tried vainly to throw them aside. Then they both went plunging down upon the roof.

In his first startled moment of surprise he realized that the man was very much stronger than himself. A hand went creeping up over his shoulder. He felt the long thin fingers trying to clasp his throat, fingers which pressed into his flesh. With a sudden burst of strength he threw aside the clutching hands as he struggled to his feet, only to meet a quick rush which took them toward the edge of the roof. Instinctively he realized there was danger there and tried to move closer to the chimney.

The man closed in on him. He felt the long arms go clutching around his shoulders, felt them slip downward along his body. He knew that if his opponent secured a firm grip it would all be over. As he thought this his clenched fist went striking out. It was a wild blow but it caught the man upon the side of the head and forced him backward. Manners could not see his face, but knew it was a tall, well built man he was struggling with, one possessed of far more strength than he was.

The blow drove the man backward, but he closed in again. With a sudden dive he swept Manners off his feet and for several moments they rolled over and over on the wet roof. Manners had but one desire, to keep the searching fingers from his throat. Once let the man secure a grip and it would be over.

As they struggled over the slippery surface he remembered that down in the yard was help. As he thought of this a loud cry broke from his lips, a cry which rang through the darkness. As it died away, he felt the pressure of the arms around his waist slacken, sensed that his opponent was struggling to his feet. As he started

to rise himself a heavy blow upon his shoulders sent him sprawling again to the roof.

Rolling over and over he slid dangerously near the edge and struggled to his feet just in time to see the running figure disappear in the distance. He hastened in that direction only to be stopped by the end of the roof. Looking down, he saw, a few feet below him the flat surface of another part of the building. As he looked, he glimpsed the man as he dropped from this, no doubt to the ground.

He stared in silence for a moment, then was brought to earth by the discovery that he was holding something in his hand. Reaching for the flashlight he turned it on; then glanced at the fabric he was clutching. As he saw the soft, dark blue cloth he remembered that in the struggle his hand had gone into the man's pocket and that he had ripped it loose.

There came the sound of voices, the cry of Carter shouting out his name. Thrusting the cloth in his pocket he hurried toward the skylight, reaching it just as Carter's anxious face came climbing through. Behind him were the chief and his assistant.

Stumbling upon the roof, Carter swept his light over his friend. His face was worried and a little bewildered. For a second he gazed in amazement. Only a few minutes before, Manners' suit had been clean and well pressed. Now it was a mass of wrinkles, soiled and stained, with a long rip across one knee. As he saw this, he broke into speech:

“What do you mean by scaring the life out of us—and in the name of heaven what have you been doing on the roof?”

In a few vivid words the story was told to the three men. They did not interrupt Manners nor did their faces show what they thought. When it was over the chief gave a long weary sigh:

"We certainly overlooked something when we did not see that door behind the stairway. But it's too late now to cry over it. It's my idea the best thing we can do is return to town and get busy in the morning. There is little we can do now, that bird must have got nicely away by this time."

Manners was not quite certain that the chief's suggestion was a good one, but the darkness bothered them and the man had vanished. By now he must be far away. Though a further examination might reveal something, yet, after all, the chief was in command.

As the car turned out of the driveway Manners realized that he was very tired. The last few hours had been crowded full of sinister happenings, filled with horror and suspense. He had read the crime literature of all nations, but he knew that what he had stumbled upon only a few hours before was as horrible as anything he had read.

Relaxed against the back seat he tried to think his way through the perplexing maze of incidents. He had discovered a murder—of that he was positive. But hanging was not the usual fate to which murderers treated their victims. And there was another thing, why had the body been removed?

Of course the murderer must have been in the house when he came blundering into that darkened room; but why remove the body? There was no reason that he could see unless it was that the dead man was someone

who would have been recognized. Of course, if the murderer had been hiding in the house while he was there, he knew that the police would be notified at once. But after a while he gave up thinking. His thoughts were getting nowhere. It was a bizarre crime, as odd as the weirdest one he had ever read about. But as for finding solution—there was none in sight.

The car came to a stop before Carter's house just as he reached this conclusion, and the men were climbing out. At the invitation to come in a moment and have a drink the chief started slowly up the steps. As they entered the living room, the dog came across the floor to greet his master.

It was a solemn drink, taken in silence. When the glasses had been placed back upon the tray, the chief took an aged pipe from his pocket. When it was filled and going to suit him, he gave a sober look at his companions. There was a doubtful tone in his voice as he spoke.

"This damned thing," he said roughly, "is as queer a set of circumstances as I ever struck. We can't have any inquest—you can't have any inquest without a body. And all we have to go on, that anyone has been killed, is the word of your friend Manners."

He shot a reproachful look at the professor, one which seemed to accuse him of being the cause of all that had taken place. Then his heavy voice continued:

"I guess it's a murder all right—but we have no body—nothing to go on. I think we had better keep the thing hushed up until I spring it. Something may turn up. And if that body was moved—whatever moved it did not have a chance to get very far. Not if they were hiding

in the house. But it won't be long before daylight and we can go over to the place again then."

The heavy red face of the chief showed lines of fatigue. He had been called from his bed to listen to what he had at first thought was as wild a tale as he had ever heard. And he had heard many. His long years on the police force had been years crowded full of experiences, but he was puzzled and back in his mind had the idea that there was trouble ahead.

However, he did not voice these thoughts. With a nod of his head, he motioned to his policeman, said good-bye and started for the door. Carter vanished out in the hall to bid him farewell. A moment later came the noisy sound of his motor spluttering into life.

Carter returned to the living room to find his friend leaning wearily back in a chair. The clock on the mantel stood at four. Though there were many things he wished to talk over, yet they must wait. Manners had passed through a trying experience and it had been a bad night. The best thing he could do for him was to show him to his room. Conversation could wait.

Left alone in his large bedroom Manners dropped into the nearest chair and started to undress. Ordinarily the room would have pleased him and he would have found keen satisfaction in his surroundings. Near the bed stood a small bookstand and he knew that Carter had filled it with the volumes he loved. But he was far too tired to find any pleasure in the room.

Struggling into his pajamas, he wondered vaguely what time it might be. As he walked across the floor and opened the window as far as it could go, he paused for a second to look without, and realized it was almost

morning. Down over a wide yard he could see the close cut grass end at the massive sea wall, a yard filled with tall trees, broken in many places by colorful little flower beds. The sea stretched away in the distance and its calm surface was beginning to reflect the approaching dawn. There came to his ears the first cheerful call of the robins, welcoming day. For a moment he gazed, then with a sigh turned toward the bed.

CHAPTER IV

IT was Carter's voice which caused Manners to waken. From a near-by bathroom there floated shrilly the words of an ancient ballad. It was always a matter of wonder to Carter's friends just where he discovered the dismal ditties which he would shrill forth while bathing.

“Come all ye people far and near
Of high and low degree.
Sad tidings I have brought you here,
And therefore mourn with me.”

There were twenty-four verses, all delivered in the same dry monotone. Manners chuckled to himself as he listened to the high voice chanting out a forgotten ballad. Verse followed verse in dismal array until at last there came the end:

“Thou seest my eyelids overflow,
Thy father's death afflicts me still.
Unto my private room alone
I'll go and weeping take my fill.”

The voice died away, a sign the bath was over. For a few moments Manners lay smiling as he thought of the dismal ballad he had just heard. No matter what might be the words, the tune was always the same. Scores of times he had heard Carter singing merrily and loudly at his bath.

Turning on his side, he glanced toward the open window. It was a bright morning, the sun already warm.

From his bed he could look out through the trees, glimpse the calm waters of the sound. It stretched away, a glistening mass of silver in the sunlight. Down on the lawn he heard the low deep bark of his dog.

For a while he allowed the sunshine to play over his face, then turned to study the suit he had thrown upon a chair when he went to bed. It had been an expensive, well pressed suit when he put it on, now it was a mass of wrinkles; soiled and stained beyond any hope of cleansing, and one trouser leg had a long cut across the knee. For a moment the events of the night played through his mind, then he placed them aside. There came the half thought that he ought to get up—a thought which he dismissed by turning with a weary sigh upon the pillow. Then he fell asleep.

He awoke again with the knowledge that it must be rather late. Jumping from the bed he turned the water on in the tub, then shaved. The bath over he slowly dressed. Down on the lawn he could see the dog vainly stalking a robin and appearing much surprised when the bird flew away.

There was a note lying on the breakfast table. The black heavy print informed him Carter had gone to town, gave instructions about the morning meal. The maid threw a quick glance into the breakfast room, then hastened to the kitchen for food. Picking up the paper which lay folded by his plate he opened it.

As a paper it was not much, just the small four-page daily of a small town; nor was the news it contained very interesting, and when he placed it aside to do justice to the breakfast, he realized that there was not a line in the paper of what had been discovered the night before.

The chief had kept his own counsel; nothing had leaked out regarding the murder.

Breakfast over he strolled into the living room. There was nothing to do and he felt a bit lazy. Picking up a magazine from the table he went out in the open air. The dog came leaping across the grass as he went down the steps, barking in frenzied joy at the sight of his master. It needed the bright sunlight to bring out the contrasting beauty of the yard and the house. A high hedge and a smooth lawn of vivid green enclosed the white cottage which was covered with climbing roses. Small flower beds filled the lawn and the tall trees covered the grass with a tangle of broken shadows. It was a large lawn bounded on two sides by a curving sea wall. The sun was warm and there was not the slightest suggestion of a breeze. Through the trees could be seen the sea, its surface unbroken by even the smallest of ripples. Miles away from the shore a boat was slowly vanishing from sight.

With the magazine under his arm Manners strolled slowly across the grass to the chair which had been placed under the shadow of a tall elm. For a while he tried to read, but the printed words could not hold his interest. The magazine slipped out of his hand and at last he lit his pipe. Sprawled far back in his chair, he began to think about the murder.

It was murder, of that he felt sure. There were supposed to be three valid reasons for murder—at least that was what the medico-legal experts said. People killed for revenge, to gain some expected advantage, and in one of the so-called crimes of passion. Under which head did this crime fall?

Few men had a better knowledge of the peculiar by-paths of human behavior than did the tall young man stretched out in the chair. The behavior of people was after all his speciality. As he pondered over the crime he had stumbled upon he decided that the man in the dark gray suit had not been killed for gain. Money, he thought, could not have been the motive for the crime. It might have been revenge. And then again it might have been a crime of passion. As he thought of that last room which they had entered, he felt certain a woman was mixed up in it somewhere. But no woman could have hung the man. To do that required a great deal of strength; also required a cold-blooded deliberateness that most women never showed in crime. His mind played with the last idea for a while.

Women often committed murder; but, as a rule, when they did, their crimes were not carefully thought out; only in the cases where poison was used, which he knew, was the classical method of women, was there ever much evidence of skillful premeditation. No woman had committed this murder; of that he felt certain. But there was a woman mixed up in it somewhere. The chief had mentioned that the house had been deserted for fifteen years, had even added that all the furniture had been moved out. The only places in the house which had any furniture were the hallway downstairs, and the last room they had entered.

That room had been furnished. An unthought of fact leaped in his mind. The chairs and hatrack in the hall were old, the heavy, clumsy designs of many years ago; but the furniture in the room was modern, cheap furniture it was true, bought recently.

This brought up a problem. Who had taken the furniture to the house and why? The roses, by now they would be faded, but twenty-four hours ago they had been a bright, fresh color against the drabness of the room, probably placed there to welcome some woman.

His pipe had gone out and as he slowly refilled it he wondered if the room had been a secret rendezvous. Perhaps some husband had stumbled upon the guilty secret, discovered the meeting place and taken a horrible revenge.

Again he thought of the figure he had seen swinging at the end of the rope. The man's clothes had been well designed, made from expensive materials. Though he had not searched the body he felt sure that robbery had not been the motive. The opal, a faint luminous softness against the dark necktie, was worth money. It had not been taken.

But why had the rope been cut—the body removed? There seemed but one logical explanation. When he had at first entered the house he had heard a sound, a sound above his head. The murderer had heard him ringing the bell, had heard him enter, must have seen the lights of the car on the lawn, have heard the sound of his engine as he drove away.

He could picture the individual, perhaps terrified by the knowledge that his crime had been discovered—picture him waiting on the second floor, expecting every second to hear the sound of footsteps coming slowly up the stairway, footsteps which could only mean detection.

Though he could picture this in his mind, yet Manners was not very positive that the murderer had been terrified by the knowledge that someone entered the house. It

required a cool, calculating brain to have committed the murder in the manner in which it had been accomplished.

It was no unpremeditated crime—not a murder committed in a sudden outpouring of rage. Everything pointed to deliberation, to long, careful planning. The method was too horrible to have been just a sudden impulse. It was a premeditated crime and one well thought out.

Again he decided that, when the body was found, it would turn out to be some person well known in the town. Perhaps that was the reason the rope had been cut, the dead man hidden from sight. The murderer had expected the police to be brought to the house and was taking no chances of his victim being recognized. He could not have gone very far away, there had not been time.

Manners decided to stop thinking about the crime. After all there was little to go on. But as he rose from his chair and started over the grass he wondered vaguely if they would ever know any more than they did. Facts were few and what there were did not lead anywhere.

Stopping at the sea wall he looked over the edge. A wide sandy beach lay below the massive granite bulwark. The tide was out and the sand glistened in the sunlight. Far down on the beach he could see some children playing with the Airedale. The shore curved away in a wide half circle. A mile in the distance were the gray roofs of the town with the white steeples of two churches peering above the trees. Beyond the town a point of land extended far out into the sound. It was a restful morning. The harbor stretched away before him, without even a ripple to break its smoothness. A few small boats, their sails motionless in the calm air lay close to the shore.

Near the town was anchored a large yacht, its white sides gleaming above the blue water.

Sitting down on the sea wall he allowed his legs to dangle over the side. There was nothing to do and he did not feel like reading. For a time he watched his dog as the animal ran leaping among the children. Then stretching himself out on the wall, he basked in the warmth of the sunlight. It was the sound of an automobile coming into the drive which roused him. Sitting up, he looked toward the house, saw the large roadster stop by the veranda, watched Carter step out. Rising to his feet he started over the lawn to greet his friend.

Before he could reach the house the maid came out of the doorway and hastened down the steps to speak to her employer. He saw Carter's shoulders rise and when he reached his side half laughed at the dismayed expression upon his friend's face. With one eyebrow raised very high Carter threw him a sad look as he slowly shook his head.

"I thought, Harley," he said, "we might take the motor boat and go fishing. But our esteemed friend, the chief, has just phoned. He wishes our presence, at once, he says, and as rapidly as he can see us. So it means a ride back to town."

"Perhaps he has discovered something," came the comment.

"Perhaps he has. Rogan has much more ability than one would judge by looking at him. A bit hard boiled; rather profane at times—but he knows his stuff. If he wants us we had better run in."

The machine was turned around in the drive and they left the yard. Carter was in a talkative mood, and every

house they passed was subjected to his laughing comments. Though he claimed he knew nothing about the summer people yet he had an astonishing amount of information for a man who had spent only a week or two in the last few years in the town. Kindly, humorous comments they were, which caused Manners to laugh more than once.

The road led past large estates. True, the high, green hedges hid the grounds from sight, but one could see the tall trees, glimpse the large houses set far back from the highway. Open driveways revealed many flower beds, gardens a mass of color against the greenness of the grass.

As they approached the town, the road started to curve away from the sea to run upward. At the top of a long, steep hill, the undulating surface of the sound flashed into view. For miles the sea stretched away in the distance. Far out on the horizon was a steamer, while down in the harbor several fishing boats were slipping past the breakwater. The town lay below them. It was a much larger place than Manners had expected. The houses which they passed hinted at prosperity. Before every house was a well cropped lawn and flowers were everywhere. The road they were traveling was wide and tree lined, the trees well trimmed and cared for.

Not until they reached the village square did Carter stop. It was the typical center of New England towns. On opposite sides of the small park were churches, much alike with the four pillars which stood at their entrances, and the white steeples which towered among the trees.

On their right, directly across from their car stood a small brick building. It had a rather battered appearance, the bricks appeared to be very old. Across a dingy

window were black painted letters. Letters which spelled out the words—POLICE STATION.

Going up two steps they passed down a little hall and went in through the first door to which they came. The room they entered was small, with several chairs and a little raised platform at one end. Behind a desk on the platform a man was reading, an individual who put down the paper when he heard them, gave a long calculating look, then motioned with his head to a door in the rear of the room.

They found the chief in the back room, seated behind a small table with a black cigar in his mouth. He threw them a scowling look as they entered without knocking. Seeing who it was he half rose to his feet and mumbled a greeting. He was not alone. Pacing restlessly across the floor, a tall thin man paused long enough to throw them an anxious, nervous look, then resumed his pacing. He was dressed with meticulous care, with a fussy carefulness showing in everything he had on. From his tie to his shoes there was not a thing that did not match.

Manners did not like his face. Just what caused the feeling he was unable to analyze. There was little of expression in the sombre features. The black hair was combed back over a high forehead. The lips were pressed tight under the small mustache.

With a nod of his head the chief motioned in the direction of the two chairs which stood against the wall. When they had been placed near the desk, the official made a gesture with his hand. It took in the tall thin figure walking across the floor.

“This is Mr. Robb, the secretary of Paul Mason,” he commented.

A thin, precise voice interrupted him.

“Secretary to Mr. Paul Mason, the financier.”

The name meant nothing to Manners. A little smile leaped across Carter’s lips, as if he was amused at some sudden recollection. For a second the eyes of the chief flashed, as though he did not care for the information which had been given. Then placing his cigar on the desk he spoke again. There was a certain dryness in his voice.

“Mr. Robb came into the station this morning—but I think I will let him tell his story in his own words.”

With a questioning look at the two men seated in the chair the secretary came close to the desk. But if he expected the chief to introduce him he was disappointed. The official turned his head aside to give a moody look out of the dirty window at his right.

Drawing himself erect Robb cast a disapproving look at the chief. In a high, thin voice he began to speak. It was the voice of a man very sure of himself, of one who expected to be taken as some one of importance, a most unpleasant voice, so Manners thought, with little life back of it.

“You see, Mr.—” he paused, to cast a hesitating glance at the two chairs. The chief rose to the occasion, though his voice was gruff as he said:

“Excuse me, Mr. Carter and Professor Manners.”

In an important manner the secretary extended his hand, then spoke:

“You see, it’s a rather difficult thing to speak about. Perhaps I am needlessly worried; no doubt I am. But it is very curious. I am Mr. Mason’s secretary—”

He paused to take a lavender handkerchief from his pocket, passing it lightly over his lips. The man was nervous, acting as though he thought he had perhaps overstepped his authority.

"Mr. Mason notified me several days ago to have his yacht ready to sail at twelve o'clock last evening. But he did not appear at twelve o'clock. In fact, he has not appeared yet. He is always very insistent that his commands be carried out to the very letter. I feel sure something has detained him. But, I wondered—"

The nervous voice trailed away with a helpless shake of the head. It was clear to see that the man was bewildered; the orderly routine of his life had been disturbed and he did not know how to meet the unexpected situation. He threw an expectant glance in the direction of the chief.

"I told Robb I would have the hospitals called up," said that official. "I did; he is not in any of them. But I also told him he was worried over nothing. His employer no doubt had a business call which took him away. Something he did not expect."

The secretary hesitated, then clasped his long hands together.

"But I told you, chief, that Mr. Mason was going away on his yacht last night. He expected to be gone for some weeks. He was very insistent when he gave the orders that we must be ready to sail at midnight, said we would leave promptly at that hour—but he did not come on board."

There came Carter's voice. The tone of a man both bored and amused at the same time. But the question he

asked caused the secretary to throw him a quick questioning glance:

“And your employer, Mason, I think you said his name was, was he sailing by any chance alone—or were there to be guests?”

The secretary hesitated before answering. He appeared to be trying to make up his mind as to how he should answer. There was caution in his voice when he did speak.

“Though he did not take me into his confidence,” he replied, “yet I think he did expect a guest.”

Manners threw a look at Carter. He was leaning back in the rough chair glancing at the tips of his shoes. One might have thought he had discovered them for the first time. Without raising his eyes he insinuated:

“A lady, perhaps—?”

An angry look started across the secretary’s face, but vanished in a second. His voice was grudging as he admitted:

“Mr. Mason did not take me into his confidence, but—but I have reasons to think his guest was to have been a lady.”

“And she did not appear either?” was Carter’s dry comment.

There came a long pause, then the man burst into speech:

“She did not come either.”

Realizing the admission he had just made, he said apologetically:

“You understand I cannot say it was a lady who was to occupy the guest stateroom. I had an idea it was. But no one came, sir; no one at all. I have been very

much worried. The captain keeps coming to me for orders about steam and I do not know what to say to him."

The chief did not appear to think very much about the story they had heard. One could tell he thought the secretary needlessly alarmed; that in his opinion there was nothing to be worried about. Manners was amused by the way he finally got him out of the room, with the assurance that he would do what he could to discover his employer for him, and in a second the three men were alone.

There was a silence for a while. Carter took a long, flat cigarette case from his pocket, passed it to his friend, then lighted his own cigarette, and watching the smoke rings break above his head he suddenly laughed.

"Do you know very much about that man, Mason, chief?"

Rogan admitted that he knew little of the man, except that he had a great deal of money and owned a yacht which was anchored in the bay. But he did wonder why the question had been asked.

"Ever get one of those yellow sheets, chief," queried Carter, "which ask you to send a dollar for a three months' subscription, and they will tell you of three stocks which are going up, away up, in the next thirty days, these fake stock bulletins, which are whooping up some fake promotions?"

The chief admitted, sadly, that he had received such literature; reminding the two men that everyone had. Then with a little laugh he added that he had even fallen for one of the offers, to the tune of five hundred dollars.

"Many people besides yourself can say the same thing,

chief, if they will," Carter asserted. "I don't know about that secretary, except that he thinks he is a pretty important man. I wonder how much he knows about the individual he works for. He even called him a financier." He gave a scornful laugh. "Mason runs about the worst of those fake financial sheets. The government has been after him several times in the last few years. We put him out of business and then he starts out again under another name. Mason happens to be his real name; he has been running the biggest fake financial paper in the country. Robb called him a financier, but he is simply a cheap kind of a crook. We will get him some day, at that."

The eyes of the chief had opened wide with astonishment as the words poured from Carter's lips. He had seen Mason several times, knew him only as one of the summer residents, but the cars he drove and the white yacht in the harbor had spoken of respectability.

He turned to Carter.

"You think, then," he asked, "there is something in his not turning up last night?"

Carter nodded.

"The Department of Justice men are the ones who look into the records of such people as Mason, make the raids on the bucket shops and the like. A friend of mine has been working on Mason's case for over a year. He is a fraud and all that, though he has kept just inside the law this time, but the case record I saw told a lot about him. Of course it was a woman who was to have sailed away with him last night."

"He would have a lot of enemies," commented the chief musingly.

"He had thirty-five thousand subscribers to his fake financial paper a few weeks ago," said Carter. "What he does, is try and get people to sell their good securities and buy his worthless promotions. Then the stock goes down. Of course he has made lots of enemies. He has ruined thousands of people."

"Humph," grunted Rogan, "now we have to find Mason as well as the body of the man who was hung last night."

Manners gave a start.

"Chief," came his eager voice, "you know the murderer must have been in the house while I was there. When I went away he cut the rope and hid the body because he was, perhaps, afraid that when you came out his victim would be recognized. Now he would not be able to go far, there was not time, and he had a rather awkward, troublesome burden to dispose of. He was in the house when we returned. Where do you think he placed the body?"

"I don't know," came the reply. "I sent two men up there early this morning, told them to search the grounds as well as the woods around the place. But they phoned a while ago saying they had found nothing."

Manners nodded and went on.

"We know the body was not in any of the rooms upstairs, though we did forget to search those on the first floor."

"My men looked them over this morning. Not a thing in them; not even a chair."

"That disposes of the house, then. But the murderer had little time to get very far. He was in the house when we went back. And I have an idea where we might find the body. Where do you think it is?"

"I bite, Harley," drawled Carter, "where is it?"

"Up on the roof, I think. I only went as far as the chimney myself. I wager you will find the body on the roof."

CHAPTER V

THE calm air of certainty with which Manners had suggested they might discover the body on the roof rather amused Carter. He threw a long, quizzical look at his friend and saw that he was serious. It might be so, he thought. Whoever had cut the rope had not had very much time at his disposal. The chances were the person had never left the house.

Rogan, however, was not over impressed by the suggestion. He was not an imaginative man. Before coming to Mansfield, his work had been mostly a matter of routine, aided by the assistance of the largest police force in the country. Now he was confronted with the first serious crime since he had become head of the local force.

When the ringing of the telephone pulled him out of bed, he thought the story which came floating over the wire was a hoax. Only the fact that he knew Carter caused him to agree to drive out to his house and listen to Manners. What he had seen of the tall young professor he liked. There was no doubt, incredible as it sounded, that the story was true.

But when they had reached the stone house and nothing had been seen after entering the unfurnished room, his faith had been shaken. If it had not been for the bit of rope tied around the beam he would have refused to go any further. But the rope was one fact that refused to be dismissed. The young man had seen something in

that room, though Rogan was still a little doubtful as to just what it was he had seen.

During the morning he had been troubled. Assuming a murder had been committed there was little he could do. He could not hold an inquest until he produced the body; without it, there was no real evidence that a crime had taken place. The law was very clear as to what evidence was necessary to prove a murder—the victim must be found.

The suggestion he had just heard did not impress him very greatly. But he had to go back to the place, and he wanted the two men seated across the desk from him to go with him. This idea of Manners could be used as an excuse. Turning in his chair, he suggested they drive out to the house.

With Carter at the wheel of his car, they drove away from the police station. Retracing the route taken into town, the car soon reached the place where Manners had driven off the road. He had timed the ride, wondering how long it took to drive from the town to the deserted house. Just twenty minutes, he discovered.

As they turned from the road to run down the winding driveway, Manners pressed his face against the glass. The previous night the trees had been dim, ghostly shadows in the darkness. Now the bright sunlight was playing over the yard.

There was a wild air of beauty about the place even though it was much neglected. The grass was high, the driveway filled with weeds and littered with small, broken branches. The trees had not been trimmed for many years and countless storms had wrenched off many limbs.

The driveway twisted its curving way between two

rows of elms. Tall, massive trees they were, towering far above the car. The drive gave very little evidence of use. The grass was high, the twisting way filled with the débris of many years.

As the house came into sight the row of elms ended. Before them stretched what once must have been a beautiful yard. Now it was a tangle of high grass and weeds, with daisies swaying in the slight breeze. Behind the house was a barn, back of that, a thick woods. The house stood on the top of a slight incline. The stones were gray with age. The windows on the lower floor were covered with thick boards. Once it had been an imposing mansion and even now there was a certain air of dignity about the place. Despite its desolate loneliness it was still impressive.

As the car went climbing up the slight incline, the door of the house was suddenly opened. A man came running down the steps to hasten across the grass in their direction, a very excited man, in the uniform of a policeman, who shouted out something which they could not understand. By the time they had stopped the car a little distance from the piazza, he was at their side. Climbing on the running board, the officer thrust his head in the open window.

"We just found the body, chief," he reported. "Found it on the roof—back of the chimney. You can't guess who it is."

Carter turned his head to watch the triumphant smile which started to play across Manners' face. From the running board came the excited voice of the policeman. His lips trembled with eagerness as the words came tumbling out:

"Me and Bill decided to take a look at the roof. And there we found him—back of the chimney. And you can't guess who it is—"

"Suppose I say you found Mason," was Carter's drawling comment, as he started to climb out of the machine.

There swept a startled look across the officer's face, came a slight nod of his head. Again he burst into speech:

"You're right. It was Mason, and oh, what a noise this will make. I can't—"

The chief, with a half growl, stopped the excited flow of words. As he stepped out on the grass he realized that his work was only just beginning. His fingers went searching in his vest for a cigar. As he lit it he threw a gloomy look towards the house. Then, with a slight nod of his head, he started for the piazza.

The previous night the hallway had been a place of dim mysterious shadows, now as they entered it Manners saw that whoever had designed the house had been a master. The lines of the stairway were perfect, curving upward in a sweep of beauty. Even the dirt and the dust which streaked the walls could not hide the dignity of the wood-work.

Without a word they climbed the staircase, turning at the top to pass through the small door at the end of the hall. Silently they went up the steps to the attic, pausing a second as they stepped out on the floor. Though there were no windows yet the open skylight above the chimney allowed them to see every corner.

The attic floor was practically bare. A broken down chair did stand against one wall and there were two small boxes in one corner—but that was all, except the

ladder which ran up to the opening in the roof, through which the streaming sunlight reflected the dust upon the floor.

It was the chief who first went up the ladder. He waited, on the hot roof, until the other two stood beside him. On every side could be seen the tops of green trees, but they did not notice this. Instead their eyes went toward the chimney. It stood, a squat object, before them, the red bricks stained by the wind and rain of many years. Around its side a man was hurrying in their direction, another young policeman, his face white and twitching with excitement. As he saw them he half started to speak, only to be stopped by the wave of the chief's hand.

On the other side of the chimney they found the object they were seeking. Upon the flat surface of the roof it lay, the sightless eyes staring upward at the sun whose brightness they could not see. As they grouped themselves around it instinctively they took off their hats.

Though the face they gazed down on was twisted in agony yet there was a touch of dignity about the still features. As he looked, Manners saw again the opal embedded in the tie, saw the stone glow with the reflection of the sunlight. Then he gave a sudden start. The black rope, the rope streaked with crimson spots, was no longer around the man's neck.

"It's Mason all right," said the chief gloomily.

For a moment he stood to watch numberly at the object at his feet. Then he strass Mann to become the keen, efficient official that he wkcited voicurned to his subordinate with a command: *Impatience*

"Take that flivver you came out in and rush back to town. Get the coroner and bring him back with you. Tell Dr. White to drop everything he is on and get out here; and get a move on."

As the policeman hurried toward the skylight, the chief dropped down on his knees to the roof. Gently he half turned the body on its side, then motioned with his head to the man's arms. The rope had vanished but the heavy cord was still wrapped around the swollen wrists.

Quickly, but very thoroughly the chief searched the pockets. Every object was taken out and placed on the roof. There was a considerable sum of money, a platinum watch, a gold cigarette case and a bunch of keys. As these came into view, each object was followed by an emphatic shake of the chief's head. The two men knew what he was thinking. Robbery had not been the motive for the murder.

The inside pocket of the coat gave up, first, a small morocco card case, then two letters. Next, the opal pin went into the chief's pocket. Then he looked at the letters. The first one did not appear to interest him, for it joined the pin, but the second he gazed at for some seconds, before passing it, without a word, to Carter.

Coming close to his friend, Manners looked at the letter he was holding. It was an ordinary sheet of thin, typewriting paper, blue in color. In the very center were written three lines. The type stood out, black and clear against the blue paper.

"Something has come up. Think I better see you at the usual place. Ten o'clock. Will be able to go from there. Must see you."

There was no signature, no date. Just a thin piece of blue paper with three black lines of type running across the center. But as Carter read it, he gave a little whistle as he turned to the chief.

"Here is probably the thing which brought Mason to the house last night," he said. "And it opens up several very interesting possibilities."

The eyes of the chief turned to the blue sheet of paper, then came up to meet Carter's glance. There was a questioning look in the older man's eyes.

"You recall, chief," Carter went on, "the secretary told us Mason was to sail at midnight—that he was to have a guest. That the person sailing with him was to have been a woman I think we may well surmise. He had quite a reputation as a ladies' man. But this message rather puzzles me."

"Why?" grunted the chief.

"For several reasons," was the retort. "Why should Mason come out here—four or five miles from town, at ten o'clock, if he were sailing at midnight. You see the note reads 'will be able to go from there.' But why was it necessary to come out here, when to reach the yacht the two of them would have to return to town anyway?"

"No one knows why women do anything," commented the chief darkly. "That is, if we are going on the hunch it was a woman who wrote it."

"I am not sure," ventured Carter. "I am pretty sure that when Mason got this note he thought it was from the woman who was to sail with him. I mean by that, he had received other notes on this kind of paper, written on a typewriter. Also, we must conclude that the furnished room down below was used for a rendezvous

by them. But I don't think a woman wrote that note."

The chief started to make some sort of a retort, but checked the words as Carter continued:

"Let us build up a theory. Mason received this note some time early last evening. All his plans had been made to sail and what he read must have startled him. There was nothing mysterious about it, he had received other notes on the same sort of blue paper."

"Are you sure of that, George?" asked Manners.

"He came out here," was the answer. "You cannot conceive of a man about to sail in a few hours rushing out here to meet his death, unless he believed that note came from the person from whom he had received similar notes."

"But, Carter," broke in the chief, "why did he not telephone to the person? He must have been curious about the note. It was quite a trip out here, when he was to sail at midnight."

"That we don't know. There may have been some good reason not to telephone. Anyway he came out here. Let us carry the theory much further. Say the note was written by someone who knew all about this rendezvous, someone seeking revenge, someone who even knew the sort of paper used in writing the previous notes he had received, someone who was waiting in the darkness and killed him here."

Manners gave a little shiver. He could picture Mason hurrying into the deserted house, could almost see someone leaping suddenly upon him, pictured a short struggle, then the horrible death. He turned to look out over the roof, thought how peaceful were the green topped trees, how warm the rays of the sun. Then he spoke:

"He must have driven out here, but where is his car?"

No one knew. Rogan suggested, after a moment, that Carter go down to the second floor and bring up a covering which they had seen on the couch. Then he bent once more to his task. It was the man's throat which seemed to interest him most. When he rose to his feet he slowly shook his head.

"It's my idea," he declared, "that as he came into the house the rope was suddenly thrown around his neck. You can find some bruises and discolorations which make that look feasible. But it's a darn queer thing."

Carter's head came thrusting through the skylight. In a second he was walking across the roof. Under his arm he bore a gaudy cover, which Manners knew had been on the couch in the room below. Taking it from his hand the chief placed it over the silent figure, anchoring the cloth with four bricks taken from the chimney. Then with a shrug of his shoulders, he suggested they go down and look over the yard.

The previous evening they had looked over the second floor, but, save for the big living room, had not entered any of the rooms on the first floor. These, when looked into, had nothing to show them. Dark, desolate, dingy rooms they were, grimy with the untouched dust of many years. Only when they reached the kitchen, which was in the ell, did they find evidence that anyone had been there, and the evidence was only the half broken bit of a burnt match.

The match joined the other articles in the chief's pocket, after being placed in an envelope. The kitchen was rather small and a rusty stove leaned in a crazy fashion toward the wall. A door opened out upon the

back porch and the chief showed them that not only was the lock silent but it had been recently oiled. There was no key in the door.

The porch was small, with a railing running around its edge. Once the railing had been strongly built. Now the half decayed wood leaned out toward the grass. Near the steps part of it had been torn away. This broken space interested Carter. Without a word he hastened across the creaking boards, to examine closely the broken woodwork. He whistled a little foolish tune as he looked, which told Manners he was much interested. Many times he had heard that same lilting chord, but only when his friend was a bit excited. And then Carter spoke:

"We can build up another theory, chief. This railing has been broken within the last few hours. You can tell that by looking at the edge here. Broken by some heavy object falling against it. It's only a theory, but let us suppose Mason came over this porch. Let us presume his murderer was waiting behind the kitchen door. He could tell his victim was approaching by the creaking of the boards. Suddenly, as the door is pushed open, he throws the noose around his neck. In the first wild struggle Mason staggers back against the rail and it breaks. How's that?"

"It's as good as anything," admitted the chief, "but let's look over the barn."

Across the grass they hastened to stand before the closed door of the barn. It needed but a glance at the thick rusty hinges to see that it could not have been opened for years. In places a few boards had fallen away from the side of the building and through the gaps they could look into the gloomy interior. But the gaps

were not wide enough to allow even a child to slip through.

Behind the barn the ground dropped suddenly into a deep ravine. High grass, mingled with tangled bushes, climbed up to the thick woods on the opposite bank, woods which gave every evidence of being a first growth. As Manners gazed down the ravine, he saw a little path curving down to the bank. At his exclamation the chief and Carter came to his side. Their eyes followed his pointing finger.

"There was no evidence in the driveway in the front of the house that anyone had used it," he said, "no tire marks except those made in the last few hours; but the room we saw must have been used often. Mason and his companion would of course drive out here. And that path has been made by someone."

The chief's eyes rested on the woods. Then he turned to Manners.

"I don't know the country round here very well," he replied, "have only had my job here a short time, but it's my idea there is a back road behind those woods. Mason would be too shrewd to use the driveway at the front. Someone might see him. There is no doubt that path has been used lately."

They scrambled down the bank until they reached a little brook flowing at the bottom. As a brook it was not very much, just a mere trickle of water which barely moved. But there was one thing. Where the faint outline of the path crossed the brook there was mud, and in the mud were the impressions of footprints.

They were unusually clear footprints, sharply outlined in the wet soil. One was the deep impression of a man's shoe, and above it could be observed where the man's foot

had slipped. There was also another outline, the sharp, clear impression of a woman's heel, an impression which the chief studied with a little frown on his face.

"Now what in the devil might that mean?" he growled.

Carter laughed.

"It's hard to say, Rogan," he replied. "Of course you will have to take an impression of those footprints. But I wonder if they will be of much value to you. One I judge belongs to Mason, the other is no doubt that of the woman who met him at the house. But just when hers was made is a problem. We have never had the idea that there was a woman here last night."

Again the eyes of the chief studied the outlined footprints. There was a puzzled frown between his eyes, then he slowly shook his head.

"Carter," he said, "if a woman made that heelmark last night, then you may be all wet in your theory about that note. Instead of its being written by some person who knew Mason had been receiving similar notes, it may have been written by the woman herself. If that is so, she was at the house last night. Though I doubt if a woman could have committed the crime, yet she may have been the bait, may have been mixed up in it."

Both Manners and Carter dropped to their knees to study the two footprints. Their fingers felt the deep impression of the heelmark made by the woman's shoe, then, as though the same thought had come to both they crossed the little trickle of water and looked at the wet soil on the other side. There were evidences of footprints here, of both a man and a woman, but they were not very clearly marked. As they rose to their feet, Carter slowly shook his head.

"I don't know what to say, chief," came his admission.

"The mark of the man's shoe seems to be a little fresher than the other, but I cannot be sure of that. Of course there is a chance that what you just said may be true. There is a chance, but I doubt it. I think the imprint we see of the woman's heel was made a day or so before the other. Anyway you had better have a plaster cast made."

The chief nodded, half glanced back up the sloping bank toward the house, then with a shrug of his shoulders started towards the trees which towered overhead. It was plain he was going to see where the path ended, so the two followed him.

The path was more defined when they entered the woods. On each side was a thick underbrush. Small bushes and twisting vines formed a tangled mass on both sides of the path, which twisted its circuitous way among the tree trunks. And every few feet they found evidences that it had been often used. It was not much of a path. At times vines plucked at their feet, and the branches of the thick bushes had to be pushed aside. However, it was a path, and at times became well defined, and after ten minutes they came out on the edge of a clearing.

It was almost circular in form. On every side tall trees stretched upward. The grass was thin, its vivid green a soft restfulness in the silence. Overhead the sky was a clear blue, unbroken by any cloud, and into the open space poured the warm rays of the sun.

Though Manners was very susceptible to beauty, yet the peaceful scene brought no response within his soul. His eyes went glancing across the grass to rest on an object which stood in the shade of the trees, an expensive automobile upon whose highly polished sides the sun was

glittering. It was a large coupé of a well known and expensive make. As the three men glimpsed it, they hesitated a second, then started on a run across the clearing. By the side of the machine they stopped, and it was the chief who wrenched open the closed door.

They found nothing of any value in the car. Digging in his pocket Rogan's hand came out with a bunch of keys. He had taken them from the coat of the murdered man. First one and then another was tried until he found the one which would unlock the ignition. Then he turned to say three words:

"It's Mason's machine."

Manners' glance went around the clearing, then he turned. The path had given place to a faintly marked road. The ruts could be barely distinguished in the grass and it curved away to lose itself among the trees. With a quick glance at his companions, he started down the path. He had determined to discover where it went. He did not have to walk very far. Changing its direction several times, the road ended at the edge of the wood. As he stepped out on a dusty country highway, he realized that the road into the woods would be hard to distinguish even from where he was. There was just a small opening in the trees which would have been very easy to overlook if one did not know that it was there.

It was a lonely, deserted country road he stood upon. There was every appearance that it was very little traveled. On each side the woods pressed close to its edge. A quarter of a mile in the distance it curved away from sight.

As he walked back to the clearing he was convinced of one thing, by using this back way through the woods

Mason would have stood very little chance of detection. At the clearing the car could be parked and he could follow the narrow path to the house.

He found Carter and Rogan beginning to get a little anxious over his absence. Explaining what he had discovered, he received an emphatic nod from the chief, a nod followed by the remark that they had better hurry back to the house; there was work to be done.

Back over the little winding path they retraced their steps. Under ordinary circumstances Manners would have enjoyed the quiet beauty of the woods. Above their heads the branches of the trees swayed softly in the light breeze. A bird thrilled in happy song, to have it taken up by another when the strains had died away.

Down one side of the ravine they hastened, crossed the thread of water and went up on the other bank. As they came past the barn, then hastened around the side of the house, they saw a small car just coming to a stop before the piazza. As its driver stepped out on the grass, Manners observed, by the black bag he carried, that it was a doctor. The coroner had arrived. He was a spruce, efficient looking young physician, whose face showed not the faintest trace of surprise as he listened to the words of the chief. True he did cast one rather curious glance toward the roof, but he made no comment.

There fell a moment of silence, in which Carter pulled out his watch. Then came his voice:

"You won't need us any longer, chief; there is a lot of detail work to be done, so I think we will run back to the house. If you wish anything just let us know. We want to keep in touch with things."

Rogan walked with them as far as their car and stood

silently by its side as they climbed in. Not until Carter's foot was about to press the starter did he speak.

"Carter," he queried, "do you think that secretary told all he knew?"

There came a chuckle from within the machine. When it died away, Carter's face came peering out through the open window. He smiled as he saw the anxious expression on the chief's face.

"I don't know, chief," came his laughing voice. "But you do know, Rogan, that you are supposed to be a very superior police chief. What was it the paper said when you took office?" The round face of the official turned a much deeper red as he scowled back at the smiling face. "Let me see if I can quote it. Oh, yes: 'At last Mansfield will have an efficient, an intelligent head to its police force. In the future there will be no crime which the skillful ability of William Rogan will not solve.' Is not that what it said?"

The phrase which shot from the chief's lips was short and a bit profane. Carter's foot pressed upon the starter; the engine burst into life, but before he slipped out the clutch, he leaned again from the window. This time his voice was thoughtful.

"I cannot say about the secretary, Rogan," he replied; "I know that I did not like his long, gloomy face. I would not trust him, myself, any too far. Besides, he must have some idea who the woman was his boss was running around with. That's the next thing for you to find out. Who was the woman?"

CHAPTER VI

IT started out to be a rather long lazy afternoon. After lunch Carter mentioned a long overdue report which he must finish before night and vanished into the solitude of his room. He had suggested that Manners might like to go out on the water, reminding him of the boats which were in the boathouse.

Left to himself Manners strolled aimlessly into the living room. It had been an exciting morning, and his mind was still a tangled mixture of emotions. For years the study of crime had been one of his hobbies. The bookshelves in his home were lined with criminal reports, collections of famous crimes, the stories of the wrongdoing of all nations. But this was the first time he had ever been brought in very close contact with a serious crime.

That it was possible to be in any closer contact with a crime than he was at the present moment he doubted. For years he had pictured how he would go about bringing a criminal to justice. A trained intelligence should find little difficulty in solving any crime. Everyone knew that the police were not efficient. Such had long been his theory. But he was a little doubtful now. The calm unemotional manner in which Carter and Rogan had viewed the body rather shocked him. To them it had been but a happening which was liable to take place any day. That they knew any more than he did as to what was back of it all, he doubted.

Going to the desk in the corner of the room he found

some paper, then went out to the enclosed porch. It was just the place to spend a warm afternoon. Through the copper wire a slight breeze swept in from the sea, and one could look down over the lawn and see the water. Dropping into the easiest chair he could find, he took his pen from his pocket. For a while he stared down at the white sheets of paper in his hand then, drawing a black line through the center, he divided the paper into two halves. On the one side he intended to put down the facts as far as he knew them. The other side he would use for whatever theories were in his mind.

He knew that there was actually very little he could put down on paper, for the known facts were very few, hardly enough, he knew, to cause him to have any theories. But at the top of the first sheet he wrote three words, then spent an hour making an outline.

THE MASON MURDER

FACTS

(1) Mason was murdered. A man cannot tie his hands behind his back and commit suicide by hanging. That is evident.

(2) He was found hanging from a beam in the Wilson house; a place deserted for fifteen years. The murder must have been committed there.

(3) Motive—not known. That is, unless the crime was one of revenge. Robbery could not have been the mo-

REMARKS UPON FACTS

This is true, there can be no doubt it was murder.

That he was killed at the house seems logical to believe. The note makes it appear he was lured there to meet some one whom he thought he knew.

Believe the murder was well planned. Perhaps revenge might be the best theory as to motive. Husband? Lover?

tive. Money and opal pin untouched.

(4) Character of victim. A dealer in fake securities. Well known to the Dept. of Justice. Rich. No doubt without any moral background. A ladies' man.

(5) Time of crime. Between ten and eleven of the previous evening. Could not have been later, and the note mentioned ten as the time to be at the house.

(6) Method of committing the crime—hanging—by a tarred rope with crimson streaks across it.

(7) Clues—not many. The typewritten note on blue paper. The rope. The footprints by the brook.

(8) Suspects—person who made the sound I heard when first entering the house. Also person with whom had struggle on roof.

(9) Odd circumstances—the furnished room; the roses in the room; the manner of committing the murder. Mason's going to the house but a few hours before he was to sail.

Some person who had lost money in Mason's fake stock deals?

This is true. At least Carter said this.

Can see nothing else to be said about time. If killed at house would take ten minutes to walk from clearing in woods to back door. Say about 10:20.

Method unusual. Doubt if I ever read of it being used. But the odd thing is the red marks on the rope. These bore evidence of having been placed there shortly before the crime. Why?

Note seems to be the only real clue. Though forgot for the moment chief has the piece of rope cut from beam. Doubt if footprints will mean much.

No doubt the same individual but no evidence as to who it might be. No one suspected.

The furnished room seems to point strongly to one conclusion. Someone who knew the house was not only deserted but perhaps never disturbed chose it for a meeting place. The roses suggest that the person met was a woman,

(10) Question—Why did the murderer remove the body as soon as I had left the house?

(11) Question—What type of an individual would have been guilty of a crime of this nature? This is a very important question.

(12) Last question—What is the oddest thing about the crime—the thing that makes it different from the ordinary murder?

The list finished he gazed moodily at the two conflicting columns. All that he knew, or, for that matter, all that anyone knew, had been written down upon the two sheets of paper. And the facts were very few and the theories at best wild guesses. It might be the police could make something from the list—but he could not.

A re-reading brought the realization that there was one question that he might have added. Did Mason's secretary know the name of the woman who was to have sailed on the yacht? The man had said he had no knowledge who this woman might be, or even more than a suspicion that a woman was to have been the expected guest. But had he told the truth?

He thought of his own secretary back at the College. If there was a single thing about him that the girl did not know, he doubted it. The secretary would be brought into very close contact with everything Mason did. He

but the method of committing the crime bars out a woman as the criminal. She would not have strength enough.

Cannot answer unless he realized the police would soon be there and would recognize his victim.

Have not thought of this before. Must do so.

The method used. Again the fact the black rope had those red splotches dashed against it.

must, it seemed, know the name of the woman. When he said he did not, he lied.

From the first moment his eyes had fallen upon the man, Manners had taken a great dislike to the secretary. There was something about the long somber face, the smooth, oily, low voice which hinted at insincerity. One of those "deep, silent men," he thought who, because they keep still, gain the reputation of being deep thinkers. The secretary must know more than he had admitted.

One thing however was clear. The house had been used as a meeting place for some time. Furniture had even been taken there and it ought not to be so hard to trace. The town was comparatively small and whoever had sold the things in the furnished room would remember who had bought them. As he thought of this another note went down upon his paper.

Folding the paper he placed the two sheets in his pocket then lighted a cigarette. Glancing out he saw his dog sitting directly under the window, looking eagerly in his direction. He had neglected the animal for the last few hours and knew he was being urged to come out on the lawn.

He had intended to have a romp with his dog but when he reached the grass he changed his mind. Through the trees the smooth surface of the sound looked inviting. He could see the dark roofs of the town houses, glimpse the white yacht which lay about a mile away. Under the bright sun the sides gleamed above the blue water. It was Mason's yacht, he knew, and but for the sudden death of its owner would not be there. An expensive toy it must be, one which would take a large income to keep up. It intrigued him. Calling to the dog he started in

the direction of the boathouse. It stood at the very end of the yard, a small stone building, whose roof just peered above the sea wall.

Standing within its shadow Manners saw that there were two boats tied in the long slip. One did not interest him, but the other was well worth looking at. Below his feet was a long mahogany motor boat, which must have cost a small fortune. That it had speed could be told from its fine lines. The machinery was not unfamiliar. The gas tank needed more gasoline; which was secured from a twenty gallon can in a corner of the boathouse. The first noisy barkings of the engine passed away and then it settled down to a steady, even purr, a purr which gave promise of unlimited speed.

The dog was a little doubtful about entering the boat; but was at last persuaded to sit on the rear seat. Opening the doors Manners eased it out of the slip, then jumped as the engine settled to a steady roar. He throttled it back to about twenty miles an hour; the speed of an express train, which there seemed to be no doubt the boat had, did not interest him.

Out in the direction of the yacht he headed. The sea was smooth with an almost unperceivable swell. Under the rushing bow the spray scintillated and danced in the slight breeze. Overhead the sky seemed very far away, its blue unbroken by even the slightest cloud. Behind him the shore curved away in a half circle. The town was upon his left, its roofs throwing back the reflection of the bright sunlight. Ahead, where a point of land ran far out in the water, stood the tall white shaft of a lighthouse.

Swinging the boat around he headed directly for the

yacht, but it seemed to be curiously deserted. As he bore down upon it, though his eyes searched the deck, tried to see within the wheel house, the result was the same. The yacht appeared to be deserted. Swinging in a wide half circle he swept around the bow, to run slowly down the other side. Then he saw two men near the stern. They were engaged in a heated conversation, so heated that the roar of his engine failed to disturb them.

As the boat went slipping past, he recognized one man. There was no mistaking the well dressed figure who was banging a clenched fist down upon an extended palm. That Mason's secretary was a little excited he could tell; though he had but a momentary glimpse of the tall figure, yet there was no mistaking his attitude.

Throwing open his spark Manners increased his speed until the yacht lay half a mile behind. Then he swung the boat around to head back in the direction from which it had just come. He wanted another look at the two quarreling figures on the stern of the yacht. One he had been able to recognize. The figure whose hand was pounding down again and again into an open palm was the secretary, Robb. Who the other man was Manners did not know, but as he did not wear a uniform it stood to reason it could not be any of the crew of the boat.

As he drew near the yacht Manners threw on a little more power and came much closer than before. The sound of his motor this time caused the secretary to pause in his heated conversation, to throw a quick look at the passing motor boat. But apparently it did not interest him, for in a second he turned back to his companion.

There was little use in going by the yacht again. No doubt his curiosity was absurd, yet Manners was very

eager to see the face of the man the secretary was talking to. From his gestures it must have been a heated conversation, and Robb appeared to have been doing all the talking. And then he had an idea. He would turn around and drift to the landing ladder and go on board. There was no reason for visiting the yacht, but he could use for an excuse the fact that the chief had introduced him to the secretary. And, as he thought of this, he threw the wheel over and swept around to head back again towards the boat.

In a moment he was but a few feet away from the landing stage. Cutting off the engine, he allowed the boat to drift slowly toward the white gleaming side towering above him. With a little bump the boat slid along the stage as his hand went out to clasp a rope. Above his head he could hear the sound of someone running on the deck. His eyes turned upward to meet the angry flushed face of the secretary looking over the rail. Though the man had been introduced to him only a few hours before there was no recognition in his glance. Instead, the thin lips were twisted in a bitter snarl.

"What do you think you are going to do?" came the angry voice.

"I was just going to make you a visit," was Manners' answer. "Thought I would like to see your yacht."

"This is a private boat," was the sneering comment, "and you cannot come on board."

The secretary stood in the opening of the railing, an angry, defiant figure. There was nothing Manners could do, so with a shrug of his shoulders he shipped the rope and allowed the motor boat to drift along the white side of the yacht. As his fingers found the spark, he threw a

glance behind, saw the long somber face watching him with an angry scowl.

As he turned around the bow of the yacht and headed towards town he was frankly puzzled. The defiant, angry attitude of the secretary as he stood glaring down at the landing stage bewildered him. The man knew who he was, had seen him only that morning, but there had been nothing in his manner which showed that they had ever met.

Before him, black dingy wharfs ran out into the blue waters of the harbor. The town sloped upward from the water front to end at the top of a long hill. A few small boats were anchored close to the shore, while on the beach, at the right of the town, children were playing in the sand. The faint strains of an orchestra floated from a large summer hotel near the water's edge, and the laughter of children drifted to his ears.

It was early and there was nothing to do. Heading for the nearest wharf, he drifted along its edge until he found a landing stage. Here he tied the boat and, with a call to the dog, stepped out on the platform. There was time for a walk through the town before returning to the house for dinner.

It was an old town and once in the days far past had been a whaling port. From the old, blackened wharfs had sailed forth ships to the far corners of the world. Once the streets along the water front had echoed with the sound of many voices. Now they were but the silent reminder of past glory.

But after leaving the water front he found that the houses became quaint and beautiful. More than one doorway spoke of the loving care with which it had been

fashioned. Little brick houses they were for the most part, with small windows, windows, he noticed, of many odd designs, houses which all gave evidences of having known better days. The newer part of the town was modern, and he thought not half so delightful as that he had just left. The streets were wide, filled with costly automobiles of the summer people. The dog, walking soberly by his side, attracted much attention; from the way everyone turned to look at the animal, Manners knew they had never seen an Airedale of such size before.

He came at last to the village square with a small park in front of him. Though it covered only a few acres yet it was a place of beauty. A small fountain was playing above the closely cropped grass, the spray thrown in a glittering shower by the breeze. Little flowers were everywhere. The main business houses of the town appeared to be centered around the square. The sidewalks were filled with people, mostly summer people, he thought, as he looked at the expensive cars parked by the curb, people apparently who did not have a care in the world.

Down one side of the square he walked, then crossed the street. Half way in the middle of the block he came to a sudden stop. In front of him was a small brick building, dingy and old, whose bricks had faded into a dirty red; the police station, where he had been that morning.

He looked at it for a moment. When he tied the boat to the wharf he had simply intended to pass an hour in looking over the town. The police station had never entered his head. But now that he was directly in front of it he might as well go inside and see if the chief had discovered anything new. Pushing through the half opened door he came into the main room of the station.

The officer behind the desk gave him a scowling look as though he had not cared to be disturbed, but as the man's eyes fell upon the huge Airedale they opened wider.

The chief was in, and, following the sweeping gesture, Manners went through the door at the end of the room, closing it after him. With his coat off, a black cigar in his mouth, Rogan was busily engaged in making some notes upon a sheet of paper. At the sound of the door being opened, he threw an angry look across the room, but when he saw who had interrupted him, the scowl left his face.

Dropping into a chair, Manners accepted the cigar he was offered, then remarked that he had been walking past the station and thought he would drop in and see how things were going. The chief had little information he could impart. The doctor had decided that Mason had been murdered some time around ten. Everything pointed to the conclusion that the crime had been committed at the house where the body was found. He agreed with Carter's theory that Mason had come to the house because of the note which they had found in his pocket, but nothing new had come up.

Shifting his weight in his chair the chief turned to look directly at the young man who sat across from him. His rough voice became confidential:

"You know, Manners, this is a pretty small town. Apparently people never see much of what is going on, but believe me they do. It's harder for a man to get away with anything in a place of this size than in any other sort of a place. These people must have seen Mason, when he had the woman he was running around with in

his car. Somebody will come in and tell us who she is, and I want to find that woman."

"It might be one of the summer people," murmured Manners.

"That is true. There are about five thousand of them here during July and August. But I have an idea that Mason did not set very well with them. After all this is a rather select colony; old families and the like. But just as soon as I get a line on who the woman was I can get busy."

For a while they theorized as to the motive of the crime. The chief was of the firm opinion that it was revenge. Of that he was very positive. Some husband had discovered the guilty secret of his wife. He even went so far as to say that the murder had been carefully planned and that but for Manners' stumbling upon the body it might have been weeks before it would have been discovered. But after much talking they both decided that they had little real idea of what lay back of the crime.

With a look at his watch, Manners rose hastily to his feet. It was getting late, time he was back at the cottage, but at the door he suddenly remembered the angry manner in which Mason's secretary had driven him away from the yacht. With one hand on the doorknob, he told the chief what had taken place. That gentleman listened without a word. Then as Manners was about to open the door, he rose from his chair and came over in front of the desk.

"I was going to send a man to look over the yacht," he said. "You see, after all, we only have a few policemen here and they cannot be everywhere. I guess I will go

and do it myself. I don't like that bird any too much. He is a bit too smooth for me."

It was almost seven before Manners came down to the dining room. The boat had been placed back in the slip and he had taken his bath and changed his clothes. He came downstairs to find Carter at the piano playing Chopin with the touch of a master, but the very moment he entered the room the maid came through the other door to say that dinner was served.

It was a merry meal. Carter had finished his report and felt at peace with the world. Between courses they discussed old friends at college, but one thing was not mentioned. Neither one said a word about the tragedy which had come into the town. They were just finishing their coffee when the telephone rang. From the hall came the long shrilling out of the bell, an insistent ring which did not cease. They heard the voice of the maid, then in a moment she appeared by Carter's side. With a look at Manners he rose to answer the call.

His voice came floating back into the dining room. At first it was a slow, careless drawl, then the tone suddenly changed. There came a surprised question, a long silence. Then again he spoke, and this time Manners heard a note of horror in his friend's voice, a note which died away as the receiver went slamming down upon the hook.

His footsteps came hurrying down the hallway, he paused in the doorway. The look on his face perplexed Manners. He saw Carter's hand go up to ruffle the sleek well combed hair, saw his lips twitch a little, noticed the look in the eyes which met his own. Then he spoke, the voice a little weary, weary and horror stricken:

"There has been another, Harley."

For a second Manners stared at him, not understanding what he meant, then the import of the words swept over him. He pushed back the chair to stand by the table as he anxiously asked:

"You mean—"

"Another murder, Harley. This time a woman. Killed in the same manner. The chief wants us in town at once."

CHAPTER VII

MANSFIELD prided itself on being the oldest town in the state. Isolated as it was from the large cities, the march of progress passed it by. For almost two hundred years it had remained unchanged. True, the glories of the ancient days, when its whaling ships sailed to every sea, had departed. Then a few wealthy families had discovered, by accident, the possibilities of the place. They saw the wide sweep of the harbor, noticed the long miles of sandy beaches, decided the town was too far away from the large cities ever to become a popular summer resort. When they realized this they told their friends what they had stumbled upon.

In the fall and winter and spring, the cold winds which swept in from the sea chilled only the four thousand people who made up the permanent population, but when June came the large houses along the shore began to open up, and five thousand people were in the summer colony by August.

The coming of the summer people had brought wealth and comfort to many. It had even caused the name of Mansfield to be once again known throughout the country. But there were many old residents of the place who still thought the summer people were intruders, who never forgot the ancient names, the old landmarks.

Like all old towns Mansfield had its institutions and traditions. There was, for instance, the famous old ship museum down by the water front, a building filled with

the trophies brought from every land, in the days when each house in the town had a man at sea. The two white churches on the common were also institutions, whose history was written deep into that of the town. And there was also Abigail Tripp.

There had been Tripps in Mansfield on the first day the town was settled. Everything which touched the history of the place had to mention that name. A Tripp was connected with every event of the past, and, though the last remaining member of the old family had never added any distinction to the name, yet everyone in the town knew her, old residents, town people and summer people alike, for she was the town librarian.

Few people could think back far enough to remember when she had not been the town librarian. True, before the summer people had given the money for the little stone library on the commons, the position had not been a very arduous one. Then the large back room at the rear of the town hall which housed the collection of books was opened only once a week. Now, during the summer months, the little stone library opened every afternoon from two until five.

The thin, little nervous librarian, whose age was around sixty, amused the summer people when her mannerisms did not exasperate them. She was a fussy, talkative woman, whose opinions were very set and with a curiosity which was never satisfied. Life to her was mostly a matter of likes and dislikes. All the modern books in the library she disapproved of.

The late afternoon sun was streaming through the colored windows of the library. A few children were looking at the books which stood in the case marked

“Children’s Section.” Behind a flat top desk Abigail Tripp was glancing for the hundredth time at the clock on the wall. In thirty minutes she could drive out the children, lock the doors and go home. She was in a hurry to go home. For almost two years she had been curious over her next door neighbors, but never more so than she had been during the last few hours.

She lived in the rambling brown house which had come to her on the death of her father. A Tripp had lived in that house for the last hundred and twenty-five years. It stood on the outskirts of the town and it was only in the last few years that other houses had been built close by.

When Robert Rand had bought the cottage which was next to her own house, Abigail Tripp had not approved. Most of her feeling was directed toward the woman he had married. As for Robert Rand himself, she had no feeling. He was simply one of the boys who used to take books from the library, who had grown up.

But his wife she did not approve of or like. In the papers which she read at times to the Woman’s Club, Abigail Tripp was always sure to remind her hearers that life was serious—filled with purpose. And Molly Rand was never serious, and if there was any purpose in life besides going to a great many dances and having a good time she had not as yet discovered it.

Shortly after the young couple had taken the new cottage their next-door neighbor discovered that she could look from her bedroom directly into their house. They were rather forgetful at times about pulling down the curtains; not over insistent about privacy. For the last few weeks, from within her darkened bedroom, Abigail

Tripp had spent many hours crouched behind her curtains spying on the house next door.

Things were not going any too well there, that she knew. More than once she had seen the fine looking woman quarreling with her husband. Rather heated quarrels they appeared to be, if the unseen watcher could judge from the gestures which were made. And as the weeks ran on she had discovered other things.

Twice when the husband was out of town, she had seen the woman slip out of the house and get into a waiting automobile. To her sorrow the car had been parked so far down the street that she had been unable to observe it closely, but both times it was very late at night when the woman returned. Often, when she was coming home from the library, she would meet Molly Rand hurrying up the street, hastening with flushed face, as if eager to be home before her husband returned. And the thin, bent over librarian had wondered where she had been.

It came five at last. She put her desk in order and hurried to lock the door. She knew what she would do when she reached home. After her supper was over she would take a bowl of strawberries to her next-door neighbor, because she wanted to discover if she was still there.

The night before as she looked across the lawn she had seen directly into the Rands' living room. There was no doubt a violent quarrel was on. She could glimpse the slight figure of the man, see his angry gestures, gestures which the good looking young woman, standing beside a table, observed with a sneer upon her face.

Glued back of the curtain, it is true the librarian could not tell what was being said. The man was doing most of the talking, and she judged his words were bitter. As

she looked, to her surprise, he suddenly darted to the woman's side, clasped her by the arms and shook her violently. A moment later she saw him hurrying out of the front door to vanish in a half run down the street.

Still back of the curtain, the eyes of the librarian never left the house across the way. Dusk was falling, and in a few moments she saw her neighbor's bedroom leap into light. Through the window she observed the woman as she took a suitcase and flung it on the bed, saw her carefully select dresses and other garments and place them in the case. Then she saw no more, for with a sudden start, the girl walked to the window and pulled down the shade.

Though she did not go to bed till after twelve, yet Abigail Tripp did not have her curiosity satisfied. Some time after eleven the light went out next door. It did flash on for a few moments just before twelve, but only for a few moments, and no one left the house, that she knew, for her eyes did not turn away until she heard her own clock strike twelve.

But after she had gone to bed she found it impossible to sleep. Not only was her curiosity unsatisfied, but her mind was a morass of suspicions and conjectures. She could always see evil where most people observed nothing, was always a little pleased when those who did not meet with her approval met with disaster. Tossing restlessly on her bed, she lay, unable to sleep. A hundred questions flashed through her mind. What the young couple had quarreled about she did not know. Perhaps the husband had discovered his wife was going out when he was away. But from the defiant, determined manner in which the young woman had flung her clothes in her

suitcase, Abigail was sure of one thing. She was going to leave him. Perhaps he had told her to get out.

Something had happened in the cottage across the way. Abigail was not surprised if the young man had turned his wife out. She had never approved of the flippant manner in which the woman spoke to her, always frowned when she thought of her extremely short skirts, her sheer silk stockings. She knew that she spent more on clothes than her husband's business warranted. She felt certain that he had turned her out.

The clock struck one. Suddenly throwing back the bedclothes, she rose and hastened over to the window. With her face pressed against the glass she peered out into the night. The mist had gone, the rain was over and there was even a slight moon. As she looked across the yard to the dim outline of the nearby cottage she saw there was a light in the bedroom window.

Just how long she stood there she did not know; the cool night air finally drove her back to bed, but as long as she looked through the glass the light was still there. Her last thought before sleep swept over her was a question: Would the woman be there in the morning?

The next morning when she got up, the first thing she did was to look over to the cottage. All morning long she kept running to the window, but saw nothing. No one left the house at nine, the hour when the husband went to work. During the long morning hours there was no sign of the woman.

All afternoon as she distributed the books she wondered. She thought once of telling a friend of what she had seen. To do this, however, would have forced her to confess that she had been spying. Around four o'clock

an idea came to her. She would have supper, then pick some strawberries in her garden and take them as a gift to Molly Rand. In that way she would discover if she had left.

She took her time in preparing her simple meal and when it was over went out in her garden. As she bent over her strawberry plants she paused once in a while to throw a glance over the hedge. Not fifty feet from where she was stood the white cottage.

Even after the berries had been picked she made no motion to go next door. Just what held her back she could not tell, for she knew she was going. The bowl heaped high with the red fruit would prove an excuse. She had to go, there would be no peace for her until she knew if the woman was still home.

It was shortly after seven when she left the yard. Abigail Tripp never actually walked, she trotted along in a half run. When she reached the sidewalk she hesitated. If it had been the large white house, the last one on the street, she would have approved of her visit, just as she did of Henry Albert, who lived there.

Pushing open the gate she hurried up the pebbled walk to the cottage. It stood a little way back from the road, set in the midst of a fine lawn. Robert Rand had taken great pains with the flower beds whose fragrance scented the evening air. But she did not notice the yard. Over the grass she went, hastened around to the side of the house and then up to the little back porch. She rang the bell, then waited. She could hear the echo of the bell as it rang, then, as it died away, she pushed it again. But no one answered.

Her eyes went to the door. To her surprise it was

slightly open. As she gazed at it a feeling of distrust came over her. No one had answered the bell and perhaps she had better go home. However, her curiosity got the better of her judgment. Half afraid, she put out her hand to give the door a push. Slowly it swung open. She could look into the little kitchen, see the unwashed dishes standing upon the table. Her eyes traveled into the dining room whose door was open. Then she called out the woman's name, and waited in silence for the response that did not come.

Stepping over the threshold she stood motionless in the silent kitchen. She could tell that the unwashed dishes had stood from the previous evening, their appearance showed that. It came over her that the woman she was seeking had left. The house must be deserted. Yet as she stood in the center of the kitchen floor there came creeping over her an odd sensation, as if a cold wave had swept through the room. There was something about the silence she did not like. A queer eerie silence which threatened unspeakable things, hinted at perverse evil. With a shudder she turned to leave the house.

But by the door she paused, irresolute. There was little doubt in her mind that the woman had left; she was alone in the house; it would take only a moment to run up to the second floor. One look at the room would tell her if the suitcase had vanished; and, if it had, what a tale to tell her friends! Yet, as she thought this, she hesitated.

It was growing dusk; in a few moments the rooms would be filled with gloom. Even now, there were long shadows in the dining room, shadows which for some reason she did not care to look at. But the opportunity was

too great to be thrown aside. She did want to know if the woman had left her husband.

With a little toss of her head she walked across the kitchen floor into the dining room. There was nothing there to alarm her and she went to the small hall. At the front a flight of stairs ran to the second floor. At the bottom of these she hesitated, to glance up their length.

It was much darker here than in the dining room and very still. Again the odd feeling she had had in the kitchen came creeping down the stairs, a feeling she could not analyze, which caused her to feel a little afraid. Again she half turned to leave the house, but with a sudden resolution she placed her foot on the first step. She felt a little ashamed of what she intended to do, knew that if anyone should find out it would be very difficult to explain. It was best to hurry she told herself, so she rushed up the steps. She was panting a little when she reached the top.

She knew where the bedroom was and saw the open door in front of her. It took only three steps to reach it, but when she did she paused again. She knew she was trembling a little, but why she could not tell, trembling as though she was afraid to look within the room.

When she did gain courage to glance past the door, for a second she saw nothing to startle her. Then all at once she saw the suitcase lying on the bed. It was open, with filmy garments of silk thrown carelessly across it, gay, colored garments of the type Abigail Tripp did not approve of. When she saw the suitcase she realized the woman had not left.

Puzzled she stood gazing at the suitcase, puzzled and frightened, for she knew now what the feeling was which

was sweeping over her in cold waves. It was fear, deadly fear, which caused her limbs to tremble, her thin lips to twitch. Then, as she started to look around the room, she gave a sudden start. For a second she tried to cry aloud, but the sounds would not come from her quivering lips.

How she reached the open air she never knew, but she was shrieking wildly as she went running blindly down the street, screaming words which could not be distinguished; but the tone was that of a woman deadly afraid.

By the time she had gone a block she ran directly into the arms of a young policeman going leisurely over a beat upon which nothing ever happened. He knew the woman whose hands wildly gripped his coat; everyone of the town knew her; but if he had not known her well he would never have been able to recognize the thin white nervous face which was twitching in terror.

Words came rushing from her thin lips, words which went tumbling over each other. At first he could not make out what she was trying to say, but, as she calmed down a little, he was able to understand a few. With a start he looked anxiously around, and saw a neighbor of the librarian by his side. Without a word he thrust his burden into the woman's arms and started on a run down the street. He must reach the police station at once.

As the woman started to lead Abigail Tripp home she saw that she was through with speech for a little while, saw that the thin twitching face was that of a woman who had suddenly aged within a few moments, knew something had frightened her beyond words. What it was, she was not to hear until later, but very tenderly

she led the trembling woman into the brown house. All the rest of her life Abigail Tripp would remember what she had seen when she looked into that bedroom. Never again would she allow her curiosity to get the better of her. She had paid, for what she had done; for the remainder of her life she would be afraid.

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN he thought it over later, Manners came to the conclusion that he never wished to ride again as fast as he had after they left the house. With a horrified look at each other, both men had started out for the yard at the same moment. Reaching the garage they tumbled into the seat of Carter's roadster. A second later the car swept out from the driveway to the road.

Dusk was falling and for some reason the road was almost deserted. He was glad it was. Crouched down in the seat he watched the speedometer creep up over fifty, reach sixty and then plunge to seventy. There it stopped though at times it tremblingly started to go higher.

If Carter had not been an exceptional driver, Manners would have felt afraid. Even at that he held his breath as they skidded around a double curve to miss a small machine by only a few inches. In a rushing torrent the wind swept across his face and he had to take off his hat to prevent its being blown away.

By the way Carter was driving he judged he knew where he was going. He cast a look at his friend's face. Carter had not bothered to grab a hat, and the blond hair was streaming out in every direction, but the face, which usually wore a smile, was now expressionless and the steady eyes never wavered from the road.

He had been so startled by what Carter had said that for the time being he could hardly believe it was true.

Another murder had been committed, and this time a woman was the victim. Then he thought of something, and at the thought his fist closed tight until the nails cut into his hand. Carter had said the method was the same as that of the other crime. The woman had been hanged.

The sheer horror of it was almost more than he could grasp. Mason's death had been bad enough; but that there should be two murders in the sleepy old town, exactly alike, was something more than he could understand. He realized again that in all his wide reading about crime he had never before heard of the method used in these murders.

They were approaching the town and people on the sidewalks turned to gaze in astonishment at the rushing car. The speed had been reduced a little, but not much. They shot around a corner with a sickening lurch, then started to run up a steep hill. At the top Carter turned to the right, ran about a thousand yards, then stopped. They were almost at the very end of the street. In front of them was a white cottage, and beyond that could be glimpsed the outlines of a large modern dwelling. Back of them, separated from the small cottage by a hedge, was an old-fashioned brown house. All this Manners saw as they started to climb out of the car.

That something was wrong they could tell from the crowd gathered upon the sidewalk. Men in shirt sleeves mingled with excited women without hats. Everyone had been talking nervously as they approached, casting quick hurried glances at the white cottage. A low fence enclosed the yard, and a policeman stationed by the gate, was preventing anyone from entering the yard.

As they sprang from the car, the people upon the side-

walk crowded around them. All were excited, the faces of the women filled with horror and dread. The voices died away as they pressed through the crowd, to receive a questioning look from the policeman at the gate, but as he recognized Carter he pulled the gate open and allowed them to enter the yard.

As they hurried toward the house Manners observed that the yard was in fine condition. The grass was close cropped, the flower gardens well cared for. Just as he reached the steps he had a fleeting glimpse of another policeman on guard in the back yard.

Though the door of the house was closed, yet it was not locked. Pushing it open they stood in a small hallway. Before them a flight of stairs ran to the upper floor, which was well lighted. They could hear the sound of voices, the heavy rumble of the chief.

Hastening to the second floor they turned toward the open door on their right. Four steps took them into the room, and then they suddenly stopped short. For a second they observed the stern set face of the chief, as he whirled around to see who had entered, saw the doctor, whose face was a little white as he looked at them; then their eyes went to the woman on the bed.

It was a brass bed with a thin blue silk covering, but this they never noticed. Instead they walked over to its side to stand gazing silently down at the woman who lay in the very center of the blue covering. It was a young woman whose face would have been beautiful if it had not been twisted in agony, a woman whose rouged lips would never speak again.

In silence they studied her. In life she had been beautiful. The close cropped blond hair gave her face a

boyish look. She could not have been much over twenty-five and there was something about the still lips which hinted at passion and self-will. Someone had thrown a blanket over her and it ran directly to her chin.

Without a word the doctor reached down and drew the blanket from the still figure, but the glance of the two men did not rest upon her body; instead, with horror-stricken eyes, they observed the red swollen circle which ran around her neck, the sinister mark which told of what had taken place.

Silently the coroner replaced the blanket over the beautiful form, wrapping it gently and carefully around the curving shoulders. As the two men turned to question the chief, Manners' eyes fell upon an object lying over a chair, something that caused him to give a little shiver of dread, a black rope, perhaps seven feet long, marked in a half dozen places with splashes of crimson paint.

"We found her hanging against the closet door," came the low words of the chief. "The rope had been carried over the top of the door, then fastened on both knobs so the weight would not wrench them loose. It was not a pretty sight."

"But—" began Carter.

Rogan threw out both hands in a helpless gesture. His eyes went searching to the bed, rested a second upon the golden head, then he slowly shook his head.

"Don't ask me any questions, Carter," he said. "You got here only a few moments after I did. And all I know you know also."

"But how did you hear of this murder?" was the eager question.

"One of my cops called me up and said that Abigail

Tripp came yelling down the street into his arms, crying out that Molly Rand had committed suicide. I don't know yet how that old talkative gossip ever found it out. But when the cop said she had found the woman hanging in her room, I had my suspicions that it was more than suicide."

"Her hands were tied together behind her back," came the interruption of the coroner. "It's not suicide; it's a murder, just like the other one."

In the silence that fell no one cared to speak. Manners' eyes went searching around the room. It was, he thought, a rather absurd room, the cluttered-up sleeping place of a careless woman. The colors of the draperies were a little too loud; the mantelpiece was covered with silly trinkets; evidently she had not been the most careful housekeeper, for the room was in a state of disorder.

The dresser was of imitation maple, its surface covered with little fantastically shaped jars and bottles. There was a stand near the wall with several cheap magazines and a book upon its surface. The book had a familiar look and was open. Noticing this, he walked over to the stand to see what it might be.

He gave a little smile when his eyes fell upon the open pages. To find a Bible in the room, and one that had evidently been read, seemed all out of keeping with the rest of the furnishings of the room. It was the room of a woman, who, without very much money, had surrounded herself with color and cheap trinkets. If the room could speak, it would say its owner had been a woman who was a thoughtless, pleasure loving, shallow individual.

To find an open Bible on the stand had rather surprised him. His head bent down to read a line of the

fine print, then he thoughtlessly closed the book. The magazines did not interest him, being simply two of the many sex things with which the country was flooded.

The door had been open when they entered the room and Rogan walked across the room to close it. As he did so, Manners noticed for the first time the suitcase. It was on the floor by the foot of the bed, an open suitcase, filled with colorful underwear and thin dresses, clothes which appeared to have been simply flung into the suitcase.

“What do you make of it, chief?” came the doctor’s voice.

There was no reply for a second, and when Rogan did speak it was not to answer the question directly.

“I wonder where her husband is,” he said.

There came Carter’s cool voice:

“Whoever killed this woman, chief, was someone she knew. That thin negligee she had on is evidence that whoever was in the room with her was someone she knew very well. No woman would wear as revealing a garment as that and allow a stranger in the room. I would say the woman was talking at the time the murder was committed. Look at those two chairs—”

He pointed to two of the three chairs which were in the room. One, a big leather covered affair, stood several feet away from the stand; the other was on the opposite side, facing the leather covered chair.

“One might suspect,” he continued, “that two people were seated there, one in the big chair, the other across the table. It looks as though the small chair had been turned around so that whoever was sitting in it could face the woman. One might judge she would be seated in

the most comfortable chair in the room. The murderer was someone she knew."

Rogan gave the black rope a scowling, vicious look as he added:

"And also the murderer was the same person who killed Mason. The method was the same. But why the devil were those red marks put on the rope?"

No one replied; there was nothing to say. Like a threatening serpent the black, sinister looking rope lay curled over the back of a chair. Again Manners wondered why the crimson spots had been placed upon it. Back in his memory was an uneasy stirring, as though, some time, somewhere he had read of something which could answer that question. But what it was he could not now remember.

"The telephone wire is cut," suddenly commented the chief. As they all looked at him he nodded his head. "Yes, it's cut, just outside the house. I tried to call the station and when I got no answer looked to find out what the trouble was. The wire is cut. Of course that proves that this affair was also premeditated."

He paused, then continued: "I want to get hold of that woman's husband. He ought to be here. I have heard somewhere they did not get on any too well. She was a little bit wild, liked to run around and was not always careful with whom she went. I think she was cheating the man she married."

"But, chief," came the protesting voice of the doctor, "you can't be foolish enough to say you think Bobby Rand killed his wife. If you think that you must have the idea he killed Mason. I believe the same person is responsible for both these crimes."

Rogan growled out he was not accusing anyone. A little argument took place between the two. The coroner knew the young husband, and liked him. When he had finished speaking Manners had a fairly good idea of the character of the man who owned the house.

If the doctor was correct, Robert Rand was not of the type who committed murder. He ran an insurance business with rather indifferent success. Every cent he made went into his home and upon the back of the woman he had married. The doctor also knew the woman whose body lay upon the bed. It was evident, though he did not say so, that he had never approved of her.

The argument over, there followed a careful examination of the room. In the end nothing of value was discovered. The dresser drawers were filled with countless odds and ends, mostly trinkets, though there were a great number of silk stockings. The closet revealed a half dozen gay colored dresses, with five pairs of shoes standing in silent array on the floor.

The search ended, they came back to the center of the room. The suitcase caught Carter's eye. Dropping to his knees he plunged his hands among the filmy garments. Finding nothing that satisfied him he rose to his feet.

"It looks to me as though she had been intending to go away," was his dry comment.

The chief grunted, making no reply. He might have spoken if it had not been for the heavy knock on the door. Startled, they whirled around to see the door opening. Into the room stepped a man. He was a heavy set man, well dressed, with a very sober look on his face. He bore an air of prosperity, moving with the air of one

who was well satisfied with himself. Seeing the chief, he spoke; the voice was well modulated and smooth:

“Excuse me, chief, for the liberty, but I heard—”

The voice trailed away as his eyes fell on the bed. They could see his glance go over the blond hair, watched it travel down to the still face. He trembled a little as his hand made a sudden gesture. The heavy voice shook as he stammered out:

“Why, why, what’s happened?”

“Someone murdered Mrs. Rand,” was the chief’s short reply.

“But—but—” came the faltering words, “I can’t understand it—I—”

“Neither can we, Mr. Albert,” was the chief’s retort. “Mrs. Rand has been murdered, however, and for the present that is all we can say.”

The man’s face grew a little pale and he shuddered. That he was someone of importance Manners could tell. The way in which he bore himself, the general air of satisfaction which was upon his face when he entered the room told that. Above the thick lips a closely cut mustache lay like a black etched line. But what he was doing in the room the professor did not know.

As if reading his mind the man turned to the chief.

“I never dreamed, chief, I would find this when I came upstairs,” he said. “I saw the crowd in front of the house, heard some wild talk that a crime had been committed. As I have been trustee for a small estate which was left Mrs. Rand, I thought it was my duty to come in.”

The chief listened with the air of a man forced against his will to keep silent. Finally, against Albert’s wishes, the chief persuaded him to leave the room, saying he

would give him all the details in the morning. When the door closed he turned to Carter.

"I suppose I should have introduced Albert," he said, "but you know of him no doubt, our leading lawyer and self-appointed moral guardian of the town. He lives in the big house beyond this one. But he would have talked forever if I had once let you speak to him. That's why I drove him out."

The chief was disturbed. The murder of Mason had been perplexing enough; now on top of that was this other crime, just as mysterious. As he cast a look over the room there was but one idea in his head: The same person was responsible for both the crimes. One look at the black rope coiled over the chair told him that.

With a word to the coroner that he would send a patrolman up to keep him company and would return in a short time himself, he beckoned to Carter and Manners. Out in the hall they stood silent a moment, then entered the first room they came to.

There were four rooms on the second floor, two other bedrooms, and a smaller room used as a den. The bedrooms were rather sparsely furnished, the chairs and beds of cheap materials, but in these rooms was found nothing of interest. Even the den had little to reveal. It was a small room containing a bookcase, a cheap table and two chairs. An unconnected radio stood on the table, flanked by a few magazines. The bookcase was only partly filled. Manners noticed that the books were not of much interest. Ten small volumes of a business course half filled one shelf, while the other two contained a miscellaneous collection of cheap fiction.

When they reached the first floor, Rogan opened the

front door to speak to the policeman on the piazza. As the door was opened they could look out to the street. Night had fallen but a nearby street lamp threw its flame across the sidewalk. Huddled against the fence were perhaps twenty men and women who never allowed their watching eyes to leave the piazza.

The searchers found nothing on the lower floor, though they entered every room. In the kitchen, unwashed, sticky, and soiled dishes stood on the table. Both the dining and living rooms were simply empty spaces of silence. There was nothing of value to be found.

With a shake of his head, the chief opened the kitchen door and looked out over the back yard. It was not very extensive, ending in a garage built directly against the rear fence. Through the darkness they could make out the outlines of a woods beyond the garage.

"The back door was partly open while the front one, though closed, was not locked," volunteered Rogan.

There was no reply. He suggested that they give a look at the garage. Across the back piazza they walked down two steps then over the yard. The grass was soft under their feet. Above their heads the sky was filled with stars. By the garage door, Rogan fumbled for the catch, found it, then swung the door ajar.

Striking a match he found a switch and turned it on. The vacant interior sprang into view. There were evidences that a car had been housed there. Old tires stood along the walls. There was an empty oil-can. The car itself was gone, a fact which did not surprise Rogan.

It was a small garage and the light illuminated every corner. As his eyes went searching over the floor Manners saw something on the little bench which was built

directly under a small window, something which caused him to hurry across the concrete floor, reach out his hand, and pick the object up. It was a piece of black rope a little over a foot long. Standing close beside it was a can of red paint with a brush lying across the top.

At the sight he gave a shout, and Carter and the chief hastened to his side. Without a word he opened his hand allowing them to see what it contained. Silently he pointed to the can of paint. The gesture was impressive and so was the silence which followed it.

The chief's hand went out to take the rope from the extended palm. They watched him place it on the bench. Saw him pick up the brush which rested on the top of the can of paint. Uncovering the can he dipped the brush into the paint then made one streak against the black surface of the rope. One streak of crimson. Without a word the three men stood looking down at the piece of rope. It was only a foot long and perhaps an inch thick, just a foot of rope with a little crimson mark where the chief had slapped the brush filled with paint against it; but, as they looked at it, each man was thinking of the woman they had just seen, the silent figure which lay covered with a blanket upon her bed. Heedless of the paint, Rogan thrust the rope into his pocket. A half oath escaped his lips as he turned.

"I will start in at once and try and find her husband," he declared. "He will have some explaining to do. He ought not to be so hard to find."

Encouraged by the finding of the rope the chief, with Carter's help, began to turn over all the articles on the bench. Tools were lifted and replaced, tins of paint were

looked into. But they found nothing more. Nowhere were they able to find a longer piece of rope.

Watching them for a while, Manners at last began to search rather listlessly through the odds and ends which stood in the corner. There was nothing of importance. Just the usual rubbish which collects in a garage. He even found another piece of rope. But one glance showed it was much thinner than the piece he had found on the bench and it was not black with tar. However, he did find one curious thing. A small cask had been turned upside down, evidently to be used as a seat. Upon its surface lay a book. It was a rather thick book with a paper cover, clean and new, as though it had never been read. In fact when he picked it up and opened it he found the pages had never been cut.

Turning it in his hands he looked at the title. To his surprise it was in French. He had never heard of the title. In vivid red letters the words spelled themselves out upon the white parchment cover:

“*Traité des Instruments de Martyre
employés contre les Chrétiens.*”

It was a curious title. He turned to the title page to find the author. The name, A. Gallonio, struck no responsive spark within his memory. He had never heard of the man, just as he had never heard of the book.

He tried to look between the uncut pages, only to discover that there were many illustrations, which gave him fleeting glimpses of horrible tortures and cruelties. He threw a glance back at the bench. Carter and the chief were not looking in his direction, had not seen him pick up the book. With a sudden resolution he thrust it in

his pocket. It was an odd thing to be lying about a garage. He had looked over the few books in the little den on the second floor, all cheap fiction with the exception of the business course. He doubted if anyone who had lived in that house could read French.

He remembered one of the questions he had put down upon the list he had made that afternoon. "What type of individual would commit such a murder?" Perhaps the book would give him some ideas. Anyway he determined to say nothing about it, that is, until he had looked it over at his leisure.

The two men had ended their search of the bench. It was easy to see that the chief was in a hurry to get to work. There was much he had to do, he reminded them. The story of Abigail Tripp had to be gone over in detail. He was curious to know why it was she had entered the house. Then he wanted to start the search for the husband.

Out from the garage they walked, then around the side of the house. Just before they reached the fence the chief told them he would hold an inquest the next day; advised them both to be present. At the gate he said "Good night," and hurried back to the house.

The crowd in the street had vanished except a few small boys who were running restlessly up and down the sidewalk. The breeze which came in from the sea was cool and fresh, the air laden with a salty tang. Overhead the sky sparkled with stars.

It was a silent ride back. Neither man cared to talk and Carter drove rather slowly. By his side Manners tried for a few moments to puzzle out just what connection the woman's murder might have with that of

Mason's, but in the end gave it up. Somehow he did not care to picture what had happened to the beautiful woman who had shared a similar fate.

Nor did they talk when they entered the house. Satin, upon seeing the sober face of his master came and placed one big paw on his knee as if to comfort him. Carter left the room only to return in a few moments. In one hand he grasped a pinchbeck bottle, while two glasses were in the other.

The drink was poured with all the calm solemnity of a religious ceremony. Both looked thoughtfully at the pale yellow liquid before they drank it. Both silently filled their glasses a second time. Then as Carter slowly replaced the stopper in the bottle he spoke. His voice was a little weary and he half sighed.

"Harley," he said, "let us not talk about the horrible thing we have seen to-night. It's too terrible to dwell on at the present moment. To think of that beautiful woman and the awful death that came upon her is a little more than I can stand. Besides we have had enough of tragedy in the last few hours."

He threw a sober glance at his friend as a little appealing smile trembled across his lips. Carter was irresistible when he smiled. The advice was good, but there was one question Manners did wish to ask, one thing on which he hoped Carter would agree with him.

"You are right, George," he replied, "let's forget it for to-night. But there is one thing I wish to ask—do you think the same person is guilty of both murders?"

He received an astonished look in reply, a glance which told very clearly that Carter was surprised at the question.

"Of course I think it's the same person, and what is more we are going to find out that Mrs. Rand was the woman who was meeting Mason at the deserted house. Furthermore, from the look of that suitcase in the bedroom, she was getting ready to go away with him. Only—"

His voice trailed away as he slowly shook his head.

"Only what?" ventured Manners.

Carter threw him a disgusted look as he reached again for the pinchbeck bottle—

"Only, let's not talk about it to-night. It's been a bit too horrible. Let it go until to-morrow."

CHAPTER IX

It proved to be a quiet, restful evening. Slumped down in a big chair by the table, Carter buried himself in a book. Upon the rug before the cold fireplace, the dog stretched out his long length and went to sleep. Near the open window, with a floor lamp beside his chair to give him light, Manners pulled from his pocket the book he had found in the garage.

As he looked at the white cover he felt a little dashed. After all, perhaps he should have brought it to the attention of the chief. There was not a chance in the world, he told himself, that the book could have any significance. Yet he wondered. The peek he had had at the illustrations had convinced him it was an unusual sort of thing.

Lighting his pipe he leaned back in the chair and started slowly to turn the uncut pages; then he took a knife from his pocket and began to cut the pages. At almost every page he paused to look at the illustrations.

They were rather crude reproductions of drawings of the early Middle Ages. Nor were they pleasant to look at. Though the design of every picture was different from the others, yet the subject was always the same, pictures of weird, inhuman tortures and punishments, inflicted upon both men and women, illustrations which showed the cruel perversities of which the human mind is capable.

The pages cut, he turned to the front of the book and began to read the text. It was a modern French reprint of a work published over three hundred years ago, a con-

cise, unemotional presentation of the tortures which had been inflicted upon the early Christians. In cold, rather pedantic prose, the ancient author set down the full details of unspeakable cruelties.

When at last he placed the book aside, Manners gave it one long reflective look, then leaned far back in his chair. It had been a horrible story, and the pictures had left nothing to his imagination. To a scholar, interested in every phase of the life of the past, the book would have been of value. But he could not understand what it was doing in the garage.

He had seen Rand's library, a collection containing only a few books, and those all of popular fiction. It did not stand to reason that the insurance man would be interested in such a book. Not everyone could read French and those who did, as a rule, read only the light romances. Perhaps the pictures—but then he remembered the pages had been uncut—to see the illustrations one would have to cut the leaves.

He gave up thinking about the book to throw a glance at Carter. Sensing the look, his friend placed the book he had been reading on the stand and with a yawn suggested they go to bed, they had been up very late the previous night, and the day had been filled with excitement.

But when Manners got to bed he discovered sleep was impossible. All the tricks which should have caused him to relax only seemed to increase his nervous tension. Physically he was worn out, nervously he was wide awake. How long he tossed restlessly he did not know. From somewhere in the house he heard a clock strike one, from the water there came the sound of a passing motor

boat. Once the klaxon of a car sounded—but sleep he could not.

At last he jumped from the bed and dragged a chair over by the window. Perhaps the night air might relax his nerves. Drawing the curtain aside he placed the chair where he could feel the cool breeze which was sweeping in from the ocean. Then he looked out into the night. Below him he could make out the dim expanse of the yard. There was a faint moon and the light played among the trees, casting fantastic outlines upon the grass. Beyond the sea wall could be seen the sea stretching into space. The garage was a black squat outline with the long dark shadow of the hedge behind it.

It was still, with only once in a while a sound of any kind. Once he heard a fish as it broke water to fall back with a loud splash in the sea. Far away the engine of a motor boat could be heard, the sound growing fainter every second. Through the trees he could catch the intermittent flash of the lighthouse on the point.

For a while he gazed out of the window then he began to think over the trip to the cottage. As the thought of the woman came to his mind, he shuddered. She had been very beautiful and the death which swooped down upon her very horrible. Two murders now, he thought, and in both cases the manner of killing the same.

He remembered that the leading criminal expert of the world, Gross, of Austria, had said that when a murder was committed there were but three questions to ask. Answer them, and one could solve any crime. But, though the questions were simple in themselves, to answer them was a different matter.

“Where? How? Why?” the famous expert had writ-

ten. Manners shook his head as he thought of the three questions. They could answer the first and the second, the "where?" and "how?" but to answer the third was beyond them. And then he concluded that if they were able to answer the third, there would still be a fourth—Who?

He felt sure in his own mind that the two crimes had been committed by the same person. Everything pointed to that conclusion. The method was the same in both cases. But to answer that third question—why?—was something he could not do. And as for the—who?—there was not even a hint.

He thought he knew however what was in Rogan's mind. The chief would of course take the obvious road. The finding of that bit of rope in the garage with the can of red paint standing beside it, did, perhaps, point to the woman's husband. If Carter was right that Rand's wife had been the woman Mason had been running around with, then they also had the motive, a very obvious one.

Then again he was a little doubtful. The coroner had pictured the husband as not only a man of the finest character, but as one who did not have the strength to lift the woman, to say nothing of Mason, from the floor. It would require a great deal of strength to lift them, and Rand was slight, almost frail.

Yet everything seemed to suggest revenge, as if someone had decided to sweep the guilty lovers from the earth. It might be that the husband had discovered that his wife had been unfaithful. At this point Manners decided to stop thinking. After all they did not know that Mrs. Rand was the woman who had been mixed up with Mason, they only thought so.

He felt more rested now, knew that if he returned to bed he would be able to sleep. As he started to rise from the chair he threw a last careless look out of the window. For one surprised second he looked, then quickly darted behind the shelter of the curtains.

As his eyes had rested on the lawn he had seen the vague figure of a man, who had suddenly darted around the corner of the garage and was now crouching against its side. He could make out the black shadow, a darker outline against the side of the building. Pressed against the wall he looked down through the curtains over the lawn, saw the shadowy figure move along the side of the garage, step out on the grass, then quickly wave a hand above his head, as though he were signaling to someone; then he darted rapidly across the grass and was lost from sight in the shadow of the house.

For a second Manners stood motionless. Though it seemed incredible, yet he had seen a man darting across the lawn. What was more, there was no doubt that the gesture of his arm had been a signal. What it might mean he did not even try to decide but turned and rushed out of the room.

Carter's room was at the end of the hall. As he came through the door, the bed was just a dark mass in the dimness. He had to fling the bedding from the sleeping figure and shake him several times before he could awaken him, but at last he roused him. As Carter struggled to a sitting position there came his sleepy voice protesting:

"Why won't you let me sleep?"

In a low excited voice Manners told what he had seen. The words were no sooner out of his lips than Carter

jumped to the floor. His voice came, thrilling with excitement:

"It's a funny thing, Harley. There's hardly anything in the house worth taking. I have an idea. Instead of waiting in the house until they come in, let's double cross them, slip out on the lawn and meet them outside. Hurry to your room and put on your shoes. As your pajamas are dark like mine and it's a warm night we won't bother to dress."

Obeying the whispered suggestion, Manners rushed to his room and, after some little fumbling, found his shoes. Before he had them on Carter's hurrying voice came whispering from the darkness. As he joined him Manners felt something cold slipped in his hand, gripped the cold surface of an automatic.

At the head of the stairs they paused to glance down its darkened length, then came a little low laugh from Carter:

"If that dog is all you say he is, Harley, they can't come into the living room without getting a warm reception. The odds are, anyway, that they will take a window at the back of the house. But I would like to know what they are after. Come on."

Down the steps they went, turning at the bottom to grope their way to the door of the living room. It had been closed when they went to bed, and as they opened it to slip into the room, the dog came hurrying across the floor to press a cold nose into his master's hand. With a word to the animal to keep silent, they groped their way across the room to the window.

Crouching behind the long draperies they cast a hurried glance out into the night. There was nothing to be

seen. No running shadow darted across the dim yard, no voices came to their ears. For a moment they looked, then came Carter's whispering voice:

"We are going to take a chance. Let us drop out of the window and creep along the side of the house in the direction of the boathouse. The kitchen is on the other end and we may be able to make it without being seen. Keep the dog in."

The window was open and the screen in. There came to Manners a little scraping sound, and he saw the screen being slowly swung aside. Then Carter's shadow disentangled itself from the curtains to slip softly out of the window. As he disappeared Manners anxiously waited, though what he expected to hear he did not know.

The dog was whining excitedly at his side. As he gave a sharp command he was very glad he had spent long months in training the animal. Though he could feel the animal's body tremble as the dog brushed against him, yet he knew that the command to keep silent would be obeyed. The dog would not follow them, he was too well trained.

With the gun clasped tightly in his right hand he slipped through the window stumbling a little as his feet hit the ground. Obeying some strange instinct he swung back the screen, as Carter's arm went clutching around him to thrust him against the side of the house. There they waited a moment, their eyes eagerly searching over the lawn.

It was a beautiful summer night. Though a breeze from the sea played across their faces yet it was not cool. The yard was a place of mingled shadows with here and there deep pools of darkness. The trees allowed the

light of the faint moon to trickle through the leaves. Beyond the vague etched outline of the sea wall they could catch the faint glimmer of the water. Though they waited for some sound to break the silence, they heard nothing. Carter's voice came whispering in Manners' ear:

"We are going down by the boathouse. The ground slopes a good bit from here and the trees are rather thick. We ought to be able, by keeping in the shadows, to work our way around to the garage."

Foot by foot they crept along the side of the house until in the shelter of its shadow they could go no farther. A few feet away was a group of bushes. Behind the shrubbery lay a great black shadow which their eyes could not penetrate. The ground sloped downward toward the boathouse whose roof they could barely distinguish.

Manners felt a pressure on his arm, then the grip was relaxed. He saw Carter dart from his side to be lost in the shadow of the bushes. Waiting a second he bent his head and made a dash for the same shelter. There they waited again.

Though he had not noticed it before Manners now saw that there was quite a slope to the ground. Before him it rose upward as it ran to the house. Because of the trees he could not see the garage, and, as he tried to pierce the shadowy lawn, he doubted if anyone at the other end of the house could distinguish them.

Carefully but quickly with Carter in the lead they darted from tree to tree, pausing a second behind each sheltering trunk. In this manner they managed to cross the lawn until they were only a few feet from the sea

wall. Then they began to work their way toward the garage. When they were about fifty feet from it they rested for a moment in the security of a small clump of bushes. Because they were only small bushes the men were forced to lie at full length on the ground to be in the shadow. As he felt the cool grass brush his flesh, Manners felt suddenly foolish. Though he had seen the darting figure of a man on the lawn when he looked from the window, yet since they had left the house they had neither seen nor heard anything.

Moving his head a little he looked around the side of the bush. The entire mass of the house was before him. He could see the dark outline of the front door, could even catch a glimpse of one step of the back piazza. Then he suddenly caught his breath—he had seen something at last.

On the front porch, close by the door, something had moved. As he studied the outline, he faintly made out the figure of a man crouched against the side of the house, saw another one near the step which led to the back porch, then, to his surprise, saw a third, close by a window of the dining room.

Darting his head back in the shadow, his hand went searching out for Carter. As his fingers gripped an arm his friend crept closer to him.

“I saw them,” came the faint whisper. “Though I don’t know what they are after, I think I know what is going to happen.”

There came the sharp, sudden crash of broken glass, followed in a second by another crash. Manners started to look again around the bush only to be prevented by Carter.

"You saw where those two men were standing," came the low remark. "You get what it means. Someone has smashed a window. It speaks well for your dog that he has not made a sound. You sure did train him well. But the smashing of the window was to get us out of bed, have us suddenly rush out of the house to see what had happened. And you notice—no matter which door we came out of, front or rear, there is a man waiting there to get us."

To Manners it seemed an impossible situation. Only the cool grass, pressing against his arm, the dark silence of the yard, made him realize it was not a dream. But there had been the realization of a sinister threat in Carter's whispering words.

"You mean?"

"I mean," came the low whisper, "that for some unknown reason it appears we were slated to be bumped off."

Carefully Manners again looked beyond the bush. The dark shadow was still glued to the side of the house close to the rear steps. On the front piazza crouched near the front door was still the other outline of a man. The third figure he could not see. But he shuddered as he drew back his head. There was nothing pleasant in what he had glimpsed.

There came a low hurried suggestion from Carter:

"I am going to creep over to that tree. It's about ten yards from here. And tell me, will your dog come if you call?"

There was a whispered "Yes," followed by Carter's instructions. He would crawl over to the tree. When

Manners heard the report of his gun he was to call the dog, then tumble over the grass as far from the shrubbery as he could. When the dog arrived they would have him down one of the men.

"Are you willing to do this," Carter asked, "risk your dog? I think when they find we are out on the lawn they will make a break for safety. But if we can only manage to get one of them there is a chance to find out what it is all about."

Manners agreed. There was nothing else he could do. But his heart sank a little as he thought of anything happening to the Airedale. He had spent hours in training him, had taught him not to move even if a gun was fired within a foot of his head, had taught him to obey all commands; and the animal had responded until the Professor thought he was almost human. In fact, he was sure he was more intelligent than many human beings.

Carter's shadow suddenly vanished across the grass. Manners cast a look behind him. There was a tree only a few feet away and when he called the dog he would try and reach it. As the seconds slipped by he thought they were endless. With every nerve at attention he was waiting for the loud report of the gun, a sound which he had begun to think he would never hear.

But it came at last, making an astonishing amount of noise. Before it had died away he threw back his head, his voice went calling across the lawn—

"Satin, Satin, come here," he yelled.

Even before the words were over, he threw himself rapidly to one side to go rolling from the bushes. A second later there came a burst of flame from the door-

way of the house, the sharp report of a gun. Rolling over and over he stopped with the trunk of the tree before him.

He heard the sound of something come crashing through the screen, the noise of feet rushing wildly over the grass, heard the excited whine of the dog as he came searching him out. Looking around the tree trunk he had a glimpse of the big heavy shadow of the dog, then ducked quickly back as another shot came from the house, to be followed by two in rapid succession from the direction in which Carter had vanished.

In a low voice he called the dog. His heavy body came pressing against his master. Manners could feel him tremble with eagerness as he touched his head. From the direction of the house there came the sound of running footsteps, rushing down the drive, a pebbled drive which crunched loudly under the hurrying feet; and at the same moment came the loud shrieking of the maid and the cook.

He stepped from behind the tree trunk, glimpsed a running figure as it vanished around the side of the house, then, with the words, "Get him, Satin!" he started on a run across the grass. As he ran he could make out Carter slightly ahead of him.

They reached the end of the house to see the opening of the driveway. Two men were tumbling into a car, a car whose engine was running. A third man was crouched low over the wheel. For a second he could not see the Airedale; then he suddenly saw him.

In great leaping bounds the dog was rapidly running down a man, a man who had turned away from the drive to run along the side of the hedge. They saw him turn,

saw his arm go sweeping up, as with a leap the animal sprang. Then both dog and man went tumbling to the ground to go rolling over the grass.

Just before they reached them they heard the sound of the car vanishing down the road. But they paid no attention to this. At their feet lay a man and crouched down on his chest with the shirt collar gripped in his heavy jaw, was the big Airedale. As the man struggled, there came a deep menacing growl, a growl so threatening that the man lay still, afraid to move.

Dropping on his knees, Carter's hands went searching through the man's clothes, but it was Manners who found the revolver, on the grass, at the place where the dog had first leaped. As he showed it to Carter he called the dog away, and, though very reluctant, the Airedale came slowly over to his side.

With the gun pressed into his back they marched the man around the side of the house and up to the front door. Here Carter had to send Manners through the window before the door could be unlocked from the inside. Then they marched into the living room and turned on the light.

The man who stood scowling in the middle of the room was small and not over twenty-five in age. It was a vicious, evil face which looked in a frightened manner at the dog, the face of one without much conscience, upon which dissipation had already set its mark. The face of the typical gangster, thought Manners.

He seemed to be more afraid of the dog than he did of the two men. Although his little eyes shot one angry glance at the gun in Carter's hand, it was the dog he did not take his eyes from. It stood close to Manners' side,

every nerve of its splendid body tense, and the cold brown eyes of the animal never left the shrinking figure six feet away.

With a glance at his captive Carter spoke; his voice was low with an icy edge in it:

“Now perhaps you will tell us what you were trying to pull off here.”

There came a sullen look across the unpleasant face and for a moment he did not speak. Then came the snarling retort.

“Youse’ll get nothing out of me.”

Carter laughed, but there was a sharp note back of the laughter.

“No-o?” he drawled.

“No you don’t,” the man snapped out viciously.

“Well, buddy,” was the cool retort, “suppose you listen to me just a second. You can talk—or—” the silence was impressive. In it the young man threw a quick look at Carter’s smiling face. The drawling voice spoke again. “Either you are going to talk or else my friend and I are going over to sit in a chair and watch you and the dog have a roughhouse. It ought to be exciting, for a few seconds. After that I doubt if you will be very much interested.”

A look of fright flashed across the young man’s face as he took a step backward. Before him was the Airedale. They could see the man’s eyes go over the big body, see the horrified expression upon his face. Then suddenly the dog took a half step forward and growled, a deep heavy growl, whose rumble contained a vicious threat. As the sound died away the man broke into speech:

"You wouldn't turn that—that—thing on me. I wouldn't have a chance."

"Just as much as we would have had if we had opened those doors. I am not fooling. Either you talk and talk quick or a little roughhouse with the dog."

"I'll talk," came the unwilling admission.

"Well," shot out Carter, "what were you after?"

The man seemed unwilling to speak, but at last he growled out, "I don't know."

Carter made a slight movement toward the dog. Seeing it, the young man suddenly found his tongue.

"Honest, I don't know," he said. "The bird that had us come down here was after something. He said there was no chance of getting into the house without you knowing. He thought if we made a big noise outside, smashed a window, you'd come out to see what's what, an' when youse did, we could bump you on the head. Then the main guy would come from the car and search the joint."

Carter threw a quizzical look at Manners. One eyebrow went up.

"What a nice little party you had planned for us," he drawled. Then his tone changed, and he snapped out the words: "And who was the gentleman who planned all this?"

The man shook his head.

"I don't know," he protested. "He was a tall bird. Got a face which never cracks; looks like an undertaker. All I knows is, he was mixed up with that bird who was murdered. The one who owns the yacht out there."

"Oh," was the comment, "I think I recognize the

gentleman." As he looked at Manners the same name shaped itself on their lips. That it was Mason's secretary, Robb, there could be no doubt. But try as they would, they were unable to secure any more information from their captive. What Robb expected to find in the house he did not know. Nor would he give the names of those who were with him. To his surprise, Manners noticed that Carter did not press him to betray his pals. When the questioning was over there arose another problem. What should they do with him. Carter had suddenly turned temperamental. He refused, he said, to stay up any longer. If they called the police it would be hours before they went to bed. Two nights of excitement were enough. Then he had an idea.

Though he left the room, telling Manners to guard the prisoner, yet the advice was hardly needed. As long as the Airedale was present the man would not dare to take a step. All the time Carter was present he kept throwing frightened glances at the animal. The dog kept his unwinking gaze upon him.

There was a long rope in Carter's hand when he returned to the room. Cutting off a piece of it he securely tied the man's arms and, motioning to Manners to follow, led him down to the cellar. There was a brick fruit cellar, built against the wall, with a heavy door before it. After placing the man inside, Carter tied his feet and closed the door upon him, and just before he slipped the bar in place he informed him that if he made any noise the dog would be put in with him for company.

Up again in the living room, the two men gave each other a long, curious look. Words were trembling on Manners' lips, a hundred questions surged through his

brain. He started to speak, only to have Carter lift one hand in the air. The gesture was very much like that of a traffic policeman stopping a speeding car.

"Harley," came the slow voice, "if you ever start to talk you won't be through till morning. I don't know what they were after. So far as I know we have nothing that belonged to Mason. In fact there is only one thing I know—"

"What?" Manners dared to ask.

"I know that I am dead tired, and we won't get anywhere talking this over to-night. I have the kind of a brain which acts better after sleep. But one thing I am most sure of is this—we are going to have a drink, then—good night."

CHAPTER X

MANNERS entered the breakfast room the next morning to discover that he would eat alone. As the maid brought in his morning meal she informed him that Carter was somewhere about the yard, and would see him after breakfast. Propping the village paper against the coffee percolator, he glanced at the headlines as he ate.

There was news enough in the little paper this morning. The entire front page was given over to an account of the two murders. After reading the news story he realized that there was not very much to be told. The chief had given out all the facts in his possession, but there was nothing new.

Long before he had finished breakfast Carter came strolling in from the yard. The greeting he gave as he sank into the chair by the window was rather short. One look showed Manners that his host was serious. The laughing lines by the lips had been erased, the smooth face was set and stern. The glance which rested upon the village paper contained a mixture of sternness and suspicion.

The meal over, Manners pushed his chair back then lighted his first cigarette of the day. He watched the blue smoke drift slowly out of the open window, following it with his glance until it vanished in the warm air. He knew Carter well enough not to speak. And after a while his silence was rewarded.

There was a hard tone back of the serious voice which came drifting from the chair by the window:

"Harley, our guest of last evening had vanished when I looked into the cellar this morning. I forgot there was a window in it. Some time in the night he managed to slip out of his ropes and climbed out of the window."

He paused and threw a long calculating glance at his friend. Then came a sudden shrug of his shoulders.

"Harley," he went on, "what happened last night is far beyond my understanding. There is nothing in the house of value to anyone; that is, unless you have something hidden away which you did not tell me about."

Manners' face flushed. He thought of the book he had found in the garage. The confession he had to make embarrassed him. Perhaps after all he should have brought it to the attention of the chief. In a few words he told of slipping the book in his pocket, then explained its contents. Carter listened with an interested air, but shook his head when he finished.

"The book hardly seems of enough importance to give any reason for what happened last night," he said. "We never saw you take the book; as far as we know there was no one looking in the window of the garage; and even if there was, it is not of enough importance to be the reason for the attempted robbery. You remember that that fine looking young man your dog brought down said Mason's secretary, Robb, was mixed up in the affair."

"Do you think he could be the person who killed Mason?"

Carter shook his head. "I don't know," he replied, "but it's not going to be very hard to discover where he was the night of the crime. But you had that scrap on

the roof of the house. You ought to be able to tell if you think Robb was the man who leaped from behind the chimney at you."

Leaning back in his chair Manners thought over the struggle on the roof. The man he had battled with had been a heavy individual with a strength much greater than his own. In height there had not been so much difference, though Manners was taller than the average man. He had seen Robb in the office of the chief. As he thought of the man, pictured the tall thin body, he knew Carter's question would have to be answered in the negative. He told him so.

Rising to his feet the blond haired young man walked down the length of the breakfast room only to return and stand by Manners' chair. There was a questioning look upon his face.

"Then we must bar him out," he declared. "But, Harley, you never took anything out of Mason's pockets, never found anything which you have not told us about?"

Manners shook his head in an emphatic denial. There came a bitter little laugh.

"Then it's a very mysterious thing," said Carter. "I thought it might be that you had discovered something, something which the secretary wanted. None of my work for the government could cause what we ran into. They were after something, there is no doubt, and it was something they thought was in the house. Wanted it badly enough to use four men and be willing to take a chance of killing us, if necessary. Somehow I have the feeling that the answer as to why they were willing to do this is you."

They argued the question for some time, reaching no

results. Manners was positive that, unless they were after the book, he had nothing which could interest anyone. Carter flatly dismissed the idea that the book had any connection with what had taken place. But he insisted, even after they went out on the grass to romp with the dog, that the answer was in some way connected with his friend.

It was almost ten o'clock before they drove from the yard to go to the inquest. Carter had evidently been in communication with the chief, for he remarked that there were to be two hearings. The inquest upon the death of Mason was not expected to take very long, but the hearing upon the woman's murder might take some time. He reminded Manners that two inquests upon the same day was a rather unusual thing.

They parked the car some distance away from the town hall. Every side of the square was lined with cars, and parking space was difficult to secure. They were expensive cars, mostly, the costly, glittering machines of the summer people. For once the sidewalks were filled with people, all hurrying in the direction of a small brick building, whose steps were black with people.

As he stepped upon the sidewalk, Manners' lips broke into an ironical smile. He knew where the people were hastening. One look at their excited faces, the expectant manner in which their eyes watched the ever growing crowd upon the court house steps, told him that curiosity had brought them forth. The morbid curiosity which makes a murder simply a great spectacle, had drawn this throng of men and women from their expensive homes. They were not going to miss a thrill like an inquest if they could help it.

Pushing their way up the crowded steps, they managed to reach the first floor of the court house. The hall was jammed with both men and women trying to push their way toward the door which was half way down the passage. With Carter in the lead, they managed to twist and shove their way through the crowd until they stood before the closed door.

Carter's fist went banging down upon the panel, and a scowling policeman opened the door a scant foot to throw them an angry glance. He half started to close it again but, after a few words, allowed them to slip inside. For a moment they were forced to stand against the wall as their eyes went searching over the room.

It was not a very large room and it was very evident that it could not contain more people. Men were standing along three sides of the walls, while the rows of benches were crowded with people. The gay gowns of the women were much in evidence, women, whose low whispering voices were never stilled. The place was evidently used as a courtroom, for, at the front, a railing ran from wall to wall. Behind it, flanked by chairs, stood several tables, while close to the wall, upon a little platform, was a large desk.

Standing near the desk, engaged in an animated conversation with the coroner, stood the chief. In honor of the occasion he had put on a new uniform; the brass buttons shone like gold. He turned away from the desk to give a glance at the crowded room. His eyes fell upon Carter. With a motion of his hand he invited them to come forward.

Up the narrow aisle between the two rows of benches they hastened, past the railing, to come to the cleared

space in front of the platform. They found two vacant chairs near the long table, and Manners sank into one and Carter joined the chief by the desk. Manners watched the two men exchange a greeting then saw Carter bend close to the chief.

From the sudden startled look which came into the red face of that official, there was little doubt what was being said. Carter was rapidly telling of the attempted robbery and it was clear that the story had surprised the chief. Once he slowly shook his head, then he whispered something in Carter's ear. When the conversation was over the chief turned to carefully look over the faces of the people in the courtroom then he bent forward and whispered again.

As Carter came from the desk to seat himself by Manners' side the coroner declared the inquest open. The room hushed to an uneasy silence, broken by the restless scraping of many feet and the nervous coughing of several highly excited individuals. Though it was optional with the coroner as to whether he should use a jury or not, the doctor decided to place the responsibility upon twelve men. Consulting a list in his hand he rapidly read out their names.

It was an unusual jury. The majority of the men had been chosen from the summer colony. The foreman was a lawyer known throughout the country for the skill with which he steered big corporations through the intricacies of the law; a well known banker sat beside a fisherman, while a magazine editor had for his neighbor a local clergyman. As he looked at the grave faces of the twelve men, Manners thought that in intelligence they ranked far above similar juries he had seen.

A nervous young man, who turned out to be the town attorney, appeared to have the conducting of the inquest in his keeping. After a short whispered conversation with the coroner he gave one quick look around the room and Manners heard his own name being called.

As he seated himself in the witness chair he felt a little foolish. In front of him stretched a room, a mass of inquisitive faces. The calling of his name had brought forth a wave of whispering comment, which died away as the coroner banged a gavel upon the desk for silence. As the attorney started to put his first question the room settled back and became quiet.

After asking Manners his name, where he lived, and his profession, the attorney quietly suggested that he tell his story in his own words. For a second, Manners' eyes swept the room. Every face was turned in his direction, women leaned eagerly forward, their lips parted, eyes shining with excitement. A morbid, curious crowd, he thought, waiting to be thrilled by a story of sudden death.

As briefly as possible he told of having driven off the road in the fog and of entering the silent house. There fell a deep stillness over the room as he went on to describe the large silent room. When in a few vivid words he pictured the body swinging at the end of the black rope there came a gasp of horror from some woman's lips.

The attorney asked no questions and allowed him to leave the chair without bringing forth the story of the struggle on the roof. In rapid succession there followed, first Rogan, whose story was very brief, then a doctor who said that strangulation was the cause of death, and a fourth witness, who caused Manners to throw a long look at Carter.

"Edward Robb," called out the coroner. There was a little bustle somewhere at the rear of the room. Through the opening in the railing there walked a well dressed man. He did not look either to the right or to the left as he took his seat. He gave one quick, rather important glance over the spectators, then he turned his eyes to the young attorney. Manners noticed that he carefully avoided looking at the table where he and Carter were seated.

As they waited for the first question, he studied the man in the chair. The gray suit he wore was new and there was even a red rose in the lapel of his coat. He decided again that he did not like the man, nor would he ever trust him. The lips were a little too thin, the lines around the mouth suggestive of secrecy and self-will, also, there was no doubt that Robb thought he was a rather important personage.

In response to the first question he gave his name. Asked his business, he informed the coroner that he was the private secretary of the late Paul Mason; "financier," he added as an afterthought. Some man in the room gave a little laugh as this was said, and an angry flush swept over Robb's face. For a second he cast a scowling glance over the room, then for the rest of his examination his eyes never left the attorney's.

If he told the truth he appeared to know extremely little about the man he worked for. Others took care of the business correspondence. He himself only answered personal letters and carried out general commands. He testified that he knew nothing about Mason's business, something which Manners refused to believe. Every

question was answered in short, concise sentences, and apparently he was concealing nothing.

"Now, Mr. Robb," was the question, "we come to the night Mr. Mason was to sail; I think the hour was twelve; do you know where he went that evening?"

"I do not," came the cold dry voice. "He told me to have a boat at the landing stage at 10:30. We were to sail at midnight. When the boat went to the wharf and he did not show up I telephoned his hotel. No one knew where he was. The next morning I went to the police."

The attorney consulted a paper he held in his hand. Someone, thought Manners, had prepared a list of questions they wished answered. He was sure of that when the attorney spoke again.

"Now I understand Mr. Mason was to have a guest on the boat. Do you know who it was to have been?"

"I do not."

"A woman, perhaps," was the insinuation.

The secretary's face flushed a little, as an angry gleam flickered for an instant in his eyes, but he answered quietly enough without any sign of hesitancy.

"It was my impression that it was to have been a woman, but I am not sure, and I have no idea as to who it was to have been. No one came down to the wharf, and, after all, Mr. Mason did not take me into his confidence, in such matters."

Despite all the efforts of the attorney, seconded by questions from the coroner, Robb had no more information to impart. The boat was to sail at midnight; about where it was going, how long they were to have been away, he professed not to have the slightest information. Nor could he give the name of any woman to whom his

employer had ever paid any attention. He dismissed the idea that Mason could have had any enemies, saying that no one had ever threatened him at any time to his knowledge. He knew nothing.

When the attorney replaced on the desk the sheet of paper he had been holding in his hand, it appeared that the examination was over. It was Manners' impression that Robb might have told the truth; that is, up to a certain point. He had volunteered no information, never going any further than the question he was asked. On the face of it he had been frankness itself, though what he knew about the man he worked for was astonishingly little.

Thinking the examination was over, Robb started to leave the stand, but the coroner waved him back. He had a question to ask:

"Were you off the boat the night Mason was killed?"

The secretary shook his head.

"How about last night?" came the coroner's voice.

Robb hesitated a second, a little line suddenly appeared between his narrow eyes, then he slowly shook his head; his voice was short and concise as he spoke:

"Last night? No, I did not leave the yacht last night at all."

He was dismissed after this. As he walked past the table he was forced to almost brush against Carter. For a second the eyes of the two men met and held. There was an amused, ironical look upon the face of the one sitting at the table; the other's features were expressionless. But Manners knew that if the man his dog had brought down told the truth, then the secretary lied. He had been off the yacht the previous evening.

The next witness turned out to be the captain of Mason's boat, a tall, heavy-set Norwegian, an individual who sat uneasily in the chair and threw a much embarrassed glance around the room. But he, too, had little of value to tell them. His orders had been to be ready to sail at midnight. The boat was to head south. Mr. Mason would inform him the next morning as to their destination. Who the guest was to have been he did not know, though his employer had said it would be a woman.

"Did the secretary, Mr. Robb, leave the boat the night of Mr. Mason's death?"

"Not that I know of. In fact I don't think he did. But I'm not sure."

"How about last night?"

The captain scratched his heavy head. His weather beaten face became thoughtful. At last he answered:

"I don't think he did. But then I went to bed at ten. I know that he was on board then. But he could have got ashore without me knowing."

The lawyer let him leave the stand with this for a last comment, though Manners had expected an attempt would be made to show the secretary might have been off the yacht without the knowledge of the captain. He had sensed that the inquest was being carried out with extreme speed. Only one new fact had been established. The admission of the captain that he had been told that the yacht would sail with a woman on board.

The audience was rapidly becoming bored. A gasp of horror had swept through the room when Manners had told of the black, crimson-stained rope, but that had been the only thrill. They had come out looking for excitement, expecting to hear a ghastly story that would make

their blood run cold, and it appeared they were to be disappointed.

When, just before the next witness was called, a policeman brought a chair into the room and placed it on the top of one of the tables, it aroused a little curiosity. But hardly anyone was able to discover that the testimony of the leading furniture dealer in the town was of the slightest importance. After he was sworn in the chair was placed before him, and he was asked if he could recall to whom he had sold it.

There was no doubt in Manners' mind that the bearded gentleman who rose from the witness stand and went down to examine the chair knew to whom he had sold it. He was a very serious looking individual, slow and methodical in all he did. Turning the chair over and over he looked at it as though he were seeing it for the first time. Then he walked back to the stand to speak in a precise voice:

"I sold that chair with other furniture to Mr. Mason. He took them away with him in his car."

That was all, and nothing more was asked, but as the man walked slowly to his seat Manners knew that another fact had been established. The chair was from the furnished room, the one room in the deserted house which had contained any furniture. And Mason had bought it. Mason had been the individual who had furnished the room.

Suddenly, to the consternation of everyone the inquest closed at this point. The coroner gave a brief charge to the jury. But they did not even leave their seats. There came a short whispered conversation, the white haired attorney who was acting as foreman nodded, then rose to

his feet. Everyone knew what he was going to say, there was only one verdict could be given—"Murder at the hands of a person or persons unknown."

There came a sudden pushing back of the benches, the sound of people rising to their feet. Over the room swept a hum of conversation. Some woman laughed, in a loud, shrill tone, then all tried to leave the room at once. From the snatches of conversation which came to his ears, Manners knew that the crowd was disappointed. It had been a rather poor show, the thrills had not materialized.

With the word to Manners that he would meet him at the car, Carter vanished in the direction of the coroner. Left to himself Manners rose slowly to his feet and started from the courtroom. Out on the sidewalk people were standing in little groups, and as he passed their voices dropped for a moment. Cars were pulling slowly from the curb, to become part of the tangled mixup of traffic in the streets.

Climbing into the car he lighted a cigarette and thought over what he had heard. It had not been much of an inquest, mostly because there was little evidence that could be given. Two facts had been established: that Mason was to have had a woman on his yacht and that he had bought the furniture with which the room in the house was furnished. Small facts after all, but perhaps of importance.

He thought of the secretary. The episode of the previous evening still puzzled him. If the man they had captured had told the truth, then Robb had lied when he said he had not left the yacht. Then he laughed. The secretary had said he had not left the boat "last night." Per-

haps he had not. It was long after midnight when he had seen the dim figure creeping over the lawn.

His thoughts were interrupted by Carter's climbing in by his side. In a moment they were picking their way among the traffic, to go climbing the hill which led to the outskirts of the town. He half expected there would be some comment upon the hearing, but his friend did not speak. Instead, slumped far back in the seat he drove with a very thoughtful expression upon his face. It was not until they had entered the house and had been told that lunch would be ready in ten minutes that Carter broke into speech, shaking his head emphatically as he looked at Manners:

"Harley, I told the chief of what took place last night. He agrees with me, that they were after some article which you must have. Now think it over. After all, you are a psychology expert and ought to be able to remember if you did pick up anything."

Manners half started to make some retort, then the words suddenly died away upon his lips. He had remembered something. The struggle upon the roof of the house came flashing before him. He recalled how his hand had gone gripping into the pocket of the coat of his assailant, remembered that in the struggle he had torn it loose.

Without a word to Carter he turned and ran out in the hall. Up the stairs he dashed, into his room, to throw open the door of the closet. There against the wall he found the soiled and wrinkled suit he had worn the night of the murder. His hand went thrusting into a pocket, then into another. As his fingers clasped a soft fabric he knew he had found what he was after.

Down the stairs he rushed into the living room. Upon

the table he flung the object he had held in his hand. Carter came close to see what it was—just a piece of cloth, the torn pocket of a man's coat, a rather thin bit of fabric, blue in color, with the lining showing.

“There,” said Manners’ triumphant voice, “that’s the only thing I have, besides the book, that does not belong to me. It’s the pocket of the coat of that man I scrapped with on the roof. But you are not going to tell me that’s of any importance.”

Carter’s eyes narrowed as he picked up the piece of blue cloth. For a second he gazed at it, turning it over in his hand. Then he gave a little start. Not only had Manners torn out the pocket of the coat, but there was also a little inside pocket which was intact. And there was something in it.

The fingers went searching into the inner pocket, to come forth with a little red notebook, a very small notebook, but bound in costly leather. For a second he gazed at it, then he tossed it on the table with a little laugh.

“But maybe this is of importance,” he said.

CHAPTER XI

IT was only a small red morocco notebook, not over three inches in length. As it lay upon the table it seemed an insignificant thing. For a while Manners studied it, then his hand went reaching forth to take the piece of cloth from Carter. It was a thin bit of fabric, the blue material of a light summer suit. As he had struggled to escape from his unknown opponent he had wrenched away the entire pocket. The inside pocket, made for change, had not been harmed.

Placing the cloth upon the table he picked up the notebook, a tiny affair, with a vivid red cover, containing not over fifty pages of very thin paper. As he opened it, a name leaped out from the first page. There, in small clear letters were printed two words: "Paul Mason." He motioned to Carter who hastened to his side. Then came his friend's low interested voice:

"You ripped this pocket off the coat of the man you were struggling with on the roof?"

There was a nod of assent.

"We had the idea that was the individual who killed Mason," Carter went on. "It must have been, for this notebook was undoubtedly taken from Mason's pocket. Why it was taken and neither the money nor the opal pin touched I cannot understand. Let's have a look at it."

With their heads close together they turned the thin pages over, one after the other, but except for a row of figures on the first two pages there was nothing in the

notebook. Only when they reached the last few pages did they see that someone had torn out at least three of the thin sheets.

"There hardly seems to be anything in this book to cause what took place last night," was Carter's comment.

Manners was doing some rapid thinking, repicturing the struggle upon the roof top, trying to remember if there was any similarity between the figure which had darted from behind the chimney and that of the secretary. It was his impression there was not. Yet how had the secretary known the little red notebook was in the house? Above all, why had he wanted it? There was nothing in it of value. He spoke his thoughts only to have Carter disagree:

"You are going on the assumption that it was Robb who was in the house that night we searched it, or else he knew you had wrenched that pocket off. Now that line of reasoning may be true, but I doubt it. Robb may have thought only of one thing. He knew you had discovered the body, everyone knows that. He evidently knew the notebook was in Mason's possession. No doubt the chief told him of the contents of the pockets. The notebook was missing. Naturally enough he would assume you took it. He did not have to know about the man you found on the roof."

"How could he help knowing about it?" was the quick retort.

"How could he know, Harley? You noticed the inquest this morning. You noticed that all the chief allowed to leak out was after all the few facts which are known—the finding of the body, the cause of death, the buying of certain furniture. Nothing was said about the

furnished room, nothing about our finding someone there when we went there. Nothing about footprints. The chief, for some reason, kept back many details. How could Robb know, unless he is mixed up in the murder? Something I doubt myself."

"Then what would he want the book for?"

"I don't know. Someone tore three pages out of it. There are only a few figures in the front. I doubt if they mean anything. Robb could very naturally assume that if the book was missing you must have it. Perhaps the torn pages contained what he was after."

The conversation was interrupted by the maid saying lunch was ready. Before they went to the dining room, Manners, at the suggestion of Carter, placed the notebook behind a book in one of the bookcases. Then they went in to their meal. But all through lunch Manners was thinking of one thing. Robb might have been after the notebook but, so far as he could tell, there was nothing of value in it.

It was a silent meal. Both men were busy with their thoughts and did not speak. More than once Manners threw a glance across the table and wondered what his friend was thinking. But the boyish face was expressionless, with a calmness which he knew might be deceiving. If Carter was troubled over anything he did not show it.

Just after they had finished their coffee and were rising to leave the table, there came a long ring to the door bell. The maid went hurrying from the room to go to the door. When she returned there was a telegram in her hand. As Carter opened it and glanced at the contents he raised one blond eyebrow. Then he sighed.

"Harley, the big chief wants my presence in Boston this afternoon. I can take the three o'clock train and be there by six. I think he wishes to talk over that report I sent in. I ought to be back by midnight. You won't mind being left alone for a few hours?"

It was a little after three when Manners turned his car away from the platform of the station. He had taken Carter to the train and his friend had offered to make a bet with him that the train would be late. The prediction had proved to be correct; they had been forced to wait almost ten minutes in the dingy little station. The train came at last and, with a wave of his hand, his friend had vanished into the Pullman.

It was twenty minutes past three when Manners succeeded in finding a parking place in the square. It was just as crowded with cars as it had been in the morning, and he knew that the inquest over the death of Mrs. Rand had drawn out as many people as the morning hearing. Climbing from the machine he struck out across the park for the courthouse which was across the square.

As he walked up the steps of the small building he wondered if it would be worth while to push his way into the crowded room. The inquest had started at two, but, because he had had to take Carter to the station, he had been unable to get there on time. If this did not last any longer than the morning hearing it must be nearly over.

But he climbed the steps and went into the hall. A few curious people were standing along the wall, no doubt people who had been unable to find a place inside the courtroom. He knocked on the closed door, to have it opened in a second by the policeman who had been on

guard during the morning. For a moment his eyes searched Manners' face, then he recognized him and motioned for him to enter.

Manners had expected that the afternoon inquest would not draw as large a crowd as had been out in the morning, but he was surprised. The room was filled. On the benches men and women were crowded together. Along the walls on the sides stood a double row of men, and in the rear there did not appear to be room for another person.

Taking his stand beside the policeman, Manners' eyes went to the front of the room. For the moment there was no one in the witness chair. The chief was bending over the desk, talking eagerly to the coroner. In the jury box sat twelve men, a mixture of town and summer people. The policeman leaned over to whisper that he thought there was only one more witness. No sooner were the words out of his mouth than the coroner called out a name: "Abigail Tripp."

A low whispering hum filled the room as the thin figure of the village librarian went slowly past the front of the platform and took the chair. Even though he was in the back of the room, Manners could tell that the witness was nervous. Her hands clasped and unclasped in her lap; a red spot burned in each sallow cheek. After one quick timid glance over the room her eyes never left the floor.

It was a disjointed story she told. Every statement she made had to be dragged from her, and long before she left the stand the young attorney had grown sarcastic. She told of picking a bowl of strawberries and taking it over to her neighbor, but when she was asked to explain

why she had gone upstairs when she thought the woman was out she could give no explanation.

A low sarcastic laugh went over the courtroom when the attorney ironically suggested that perhaps she had been curious. The thin face flushed a deep red at the laughter, and she threw a half defiant look at the coroner, but she was forced to reply. In a shaking, nervous voice she answered that she did not know why she had gone up to the second floor; some impulse which she could not explain had caused her to climb the stairs.

The room fell into a deep silence as she mentioned the feeling of fright which had swept over her when she reached the second floor. Then came a long pause and the woman trembled. Her low voice shook as she stammered out:

“Then—then—I looked in the bedroom and I saw—”

“You saw what?” came the question.

The face of the woman had grown white. It was a weary look, yet behind it was fright, as though again she was seeing some sinister object, something she could never forget.

“I saw”—she stammered—“Molly Rand hanging to the closet door. There was a black rope around her neck, a rope with red spots on it.”

Somewhere in the room there came a loud horrified gasp from a woman; there was the noise of feet scraping nervously on the floor; excited whisperings came from the crowded benches. For the first time, the horror of the woman’s death seemed to have reached the spectators.

Though the attorney asked a few more questions, the librarian had nothing more to give. She had run screaming to the street, and after that she did not know just

what she did. But when she left the stand, though she had told of finding the woman's body, on the most important thing of all she could give no information. She had seen no one enter the house. Though she was forced to admit that she had watched the house for hours from her window, yet no one had turned up the walk which led to the white cottage.

The policeman had been right; she was the last witness. As the coroner announced that the hearing was over and turned to the jury, Manners wondered if anything had been discovered. Turning to the policeman he asked him a whispered question, only to receive an emphatic shake of the head. A second later he knew that the hearing had been barren of results. Without leaving their seats the jury brought in the same verdict which had been rendered in the morning. The woman had been murdered, but by whom there was not even a hint.

Just before the crowd started to rise the chief came rushing down the aisle to Manners' side, asking him to come over to the police station, then Rogan went hurrying back in an endeavor to reach the coroner before he left the desk. Manners half started to follow him, but, seeing that the narrow aisle was already crowded, decided to go outside. On the sidewalk he paused for a moment to watch the people as they came pouring out of the courthouse doors.

Walking across the park he thought how useless had been the inquests. All they knew was that two persons had been murdered, no doubt by the same individual. The morning inquest had brought forth no motive, not even the slightest hint of one. He doubted that the afternoon hearing had been any different. He had always

wished he could be on the inside of a criminal case. Now he was, but he knew no more about it than anyone else.

In the center of the park he paused for a few moments to watch the children engaged in sailing toy yachts in the circular pond. The air was filled with their excited laughter, as they ran wildly around the small body of water. For a time he watched them then crossed the street and went into the police station.

Rogan had just entered and Manners followed him into the rear room. Dropping his hat on the desk, the chief found a box of cigars which he extended to his visitor.

“Where’s Carter?” he asked.

Being told he had gone to Boston, Rogan nodded as he seated himself. The round, red-faced man seemed a little tired and there was a weary edge to his voice when he spoke.

“If I could pick up your three gangsters,” he said, “I would take their fingerprints and hold them, on the charge of carrying concealed weapons, until I heard from New York. But I don’t see why they tried to bust into Carter’s place last night. Can you identify them?”

Manners slowly shook his head, reminding the chief that the only face they had seen was the face of the one the dog had captured. As for identifying them there was not a chance. For a while they discussed the inquest. There was very little to talk over. No new facts had been disclosed; there was not the slightest hint as to the motive for the murders. But, when he left the station, Manners felt certain that the chief now thought Rand

had not only killed his wife, but perhaps had been guilty also of the death of Mason.

He had been told by the chief that several persons had come into the station and said they had seen the woman in Mason's car. He had not used this at the inquest, thinking that for the time being it was of no importance, but he had said that within the next few hours he expected to have the woman's husband under arrest. He thought he knew where he could pick him up.

Back in the car, Manners drove away from the square, climbing the hill which led to the outskirts of the town. It was early and there was nothing to do. There was time before supper to carry out one idea which had been on his mind all day—to go again to the stone house and look it over at his leisure. It might be an absurd thing to do but at least it would pass the time away.

Twenty minutes later he was driving between two rows of trees. As he came out on what had once been the large lawn, he saw the house before him. The sunshine was playing over its sides and though there was an air of loneliness about the place, yet there was also a certain touch of beauty. Once it must have been the show place of the town.

He did not step out of the machine for a while. Relaxed against the seat, he allowed his glance to play around the yard. The bright sunshine poured over everything. If the grass was cut, the shrubbery trimmed, it could be made very attractive. He wondered why someone had not snapped it up for a summer home. The stone house was not beautiful, but a little money spent in remodeling the piazza and the addition of a few bow windows would make it look different. It was an oddly

built house. Why anyone should have wished to have the great heavy beams which ran across the living room was something he could not comprehend. But then, styles had changed in architecture since the house had been erected.

His hand went fumbling for his pipe; when it was lit he cast a long reflective look at the house. If the moss-covered stones could only speak—as he thought this he laughed. He had read many mystery stories. None of them had a better setting than the crime he had stumbled on. But in every mystery story there had been clues, which the skillful detective had recognized; clues seemed missing in this case. He had often thought that a knowledge of the science which he taught, psychology, would prove a great aid in unraveling crime. But psychology had to do with human conduct, the reactions of men and women to given situations. So far he found no way to apply his technical knowledge.

With a little frown between his eyes he climbed down from his machine. There was a flashlight in the side pocket, and after a moment's reflection he thrust it in his pocket. The gun that he always kept there joined the light. Why he took it he did not know, but the cool flat surface felt reassuring.

Crossing the grass he walked around the side of the building until he stood below a window of the living room. It was covered with thick boards, but he noticed that the lower one was loose. With a sudden wrench he pulled it away, revealing a dirty pane of glass. It would let some light filter into the room. As he thought of this he went to the other window and after a little struggle pulled off another board.

The chief had told him that they had been unable to find the key for the back door, so he was not surprised to find it unlocked. He gave the small dingy kitchen but a glance, going at once into the great living room. The pulling off of the two boards had made a difference. Though it was still gloomy, yet some sunshine was coming through the window.

It was an unusually large room, running the entire length of the house. He tried to picture how it must have looked with a fire burning in the great fireplace, and well furnished. But his imagination was not equal to the task. Now it was simply a vast empty space, a room where the dark beams overhead brought back to his mind a sinister picture.

From room to room he went, the floors echoing his lonely footsteps. Dust was everywhere. Cobwebs were spun across the darkened windows. He opened the cupboards and glanced at the dark interiors. His expectation of finding anything was more a vague hope than an expectation. When he again stepped out on the grass he felt he had wasted his time.

There was nothing in the house of interest. Twice it had been looked over and all its secrets brought to light. He half started to go to the car when his eye fell on the barn. Though he felt it was foolish—for only yesterday they had seen that the heavy door had not been opened in years—he walked through the high grass, to stand beside the weather beaten building.

He gave a languid glance at the rusted hinges of the door. No one had moved them for many a month. That was evident. Then, mostly because he did not know what to do, he started to walk around the place. At the

rear of the building he found a door which they had failed to notice the day before. In fact, when he saw it, he remembered that they had not been to the rear of the barn.

This door had a latch and in a second it had swung open. The interior of the barn leaped into view. On one side was a row of stalls; on the other, stood a rather dilapidated wagon flanked by an ancient reaping machine. There were many places where the boards had fallen away and the sunlight came filtering through the cracks and over the dirty floor, to show the dust and grime of many years.

There seemed no necessity to go inside, but he did, even though he felt it an absurd thing to do. In the middle of the floor he stood glancing around. The building was well made, the beams which supported the framework heavy and massive. Overhead was an empty hay loft and he heard the mice rustling among the rubbish on the floor.

There was nothing to interest him in the barn. It was simply a place of silence, a desolate reminder of other days. His eyes went down to his wrist watch and with a start he saw it was nearly six o'clock, time he was getting back to the house for dinner. Just as he started for the door he saw a small cupboard over in the farther corner.

How he had happened to overlook it until now, he wondered. He walked across the floor and opened the small wooden door. There appeared to be nothing of interest inside. The bottom shelf contained a few rusty nails; the second was empty; but, shoved back on the top shelf, he saw what appeared at first glance to be simply a mass of black rags.

Sheer curiosity caused him to pull the black cloth from the shelf. With a little shake he allowed it to unroll. With a trembling movement it unwound to go rolling down to his feet. His eyes opened wide with surprise as he looked at what he held. A long low whistle came from his lips.

The black cloth was not, as he had thought, a mass of rags. Instead it was a garment, fairly new, made of black cotton cloth. But as he gazed at it he knew it was a queer thing to have found in a barn. In his hand he was holding a robe. There was a bag-like affair which could go over one's head. Two little slots were cut in the fabric for the eyes. The sleeves were long, fastened at the end with an elastic band.

As he looked at the robe, Manners' face twisted into a bitter smile. The costume seemed familiar. That is, it would have been familiar if it had not been black. He was holding in his hand a costume very much like that worn by the Ku Klux Klan. Only this costume was black. In his hand was a long black robe. What was it doing in the barn or what could it mean? He did not know. But he intended to know.

CHAPTER XII

THE drive back to the cottage took longer than it should have taken. On the seat beside him, rolled into a little bundle, lay the black robe. Again and again Manners' eyes dropped down to the thin fabric, and the glance always contained a mixture of doubt and perplexity. He drove slowly, for he was trying to think; though his thoughts were getting him nowhere.

This robe that he had found pushed far back on the top shelf of the closet in the barn—when a person had it on with the hood drawn over his head he would be completely hidden. It could not have been worn very often for the cloth was new, and the garment showed little evidence of use. But it was an odd thing to have found there. To what use it could have been put he could only conjecture.

Could the murderer of Mason have slipped on the bizarre robe before he committed his crime? If so, what had been the reason for wearing the disguise? It would be a disguise, of that there was no doubt. But then, there was no reason to wear the robe, Mason must have been dead a few moments after the man had leaped upon him.

He was coming to one conclusion. Slowly but surely one impression was forming in his mind. Behind both murders there would be found in the end some emotionally unbalanced person. There had been the crimson spots upon the black robe. No normal individual would have gone to the trouble to put them there. And now

there was this black robe, an absurd thing in itself, yet chosen for a purpose.

But what could be the purpose? There was none unless some unbalanced individual had been behind the crimes. Black and red were colors which had an odd effect upon certain types, driven by sadistic impulses. Red was a symbol, a common one. Anyone acquainted with the weird bypaths which human conduct often took knew the significance of this color. Red and black, symbols of revenge, of punishment, of blood. Had some unbalanced creature, one with a warped and twisted brain, used these colors purposely?

Long before he drove into the driveway and greeted the dog, who came leaping to the side of the machine, he had formed one conclusion. The search for the murderer of Mason and Mrs. Rand must be narrowed down to a certain type of individual, one who was emotionally unbalanced, who might have even thought he was committing an act of justice when he removed both people from the earth. The search for this person might prove a difficult task. It was an abnormality which would break forth only under strong excitement.

He left the car in the drive and turned his attention to the Airedale. The dog had evidently been playing all afternoon upon the beach, playing earnestly, no doubt, but not wisely. As he tried to brush against his master, the odor of a very dead fish was much apparent. It was too late to give him a bath, so taking the dog through the back door he thrust him into the cellar.

It was a lonely dinner. Without Carter the house seemed very silent and for some reason Manners felt a little depressed. As the dessert was placed on the table,

the maid told him she had received a telephone call that her mother was ill. Could she go to town after the dishes were washed? The cook was off for the night and she had nothing to do after the dishes were washed. Without speaking, he nodded his head in assent to the request.

Dinner over, he strolled into the living room and, picking up a book, settled back to an evening of solitude. Ordinarily the book would have held his interest, but not this evening. After a few moments spent in a vain endeavor to read the page before him, the book was tossed upon the table. Read he could not.

Taking his pipe from his pocket he lighted it, then, slumped far down in the chair, watched the blue smoke curl to the ceiling. There was nothing to do, and he did not feel like reading. He heard the maid go hastening down the hall and a second later there came the sound of the front door being closed. With the exception of the dog in the cellar he was alone in the house.

For a while he did not move. There was enough to think about, but he had no desire to think. It is true that for a second he thought of all that had taken place since he had left the College. But then he closed his eyes and lay back in the chair, a picture of indolent ease, as he half dozed.

How long he slept he did not know. But suddenly he sat upright to find that he was wide awake. For a second his eyes went searching suspiciously over the room, as though trying to discover what it was that had roused him. But the room was still and, though he listened, there came no sound from the yard.

His eyes fell upon the writing desk in the corner. Upon its open surface lay many sheets of paper flanked by a

large ink stand. As he saw them he remembered the memoranda he had made upon the murder he had stumbled upon. He had to pass the time away somehow and might as well make another series of notes.

Rising to his feet he went over to the desk and took some of the paper back to his easy chair. The lights bothered him a little, so he turned them all out save the floor lamp by his side. In the next hour he wrote down a series of notes upon the paper. When they were ended he came to the conclusion that the work amounted to nothing.

THE SECOND MURDER

(so he headed this list)

FACTS

(1) Cause of death—hanging. Same method as used in other murder.

(2) By whom? Think there is no doubt it was the same person who committed the first crime.

(3) Motive? It begins to look like revenge. Know that robbery was not the reason. And cannot think of any other reason. A crime of passion would come under the head of revenge.

(4) Suspects—Chief thinks the woman's husband knew of her affair with Mason, that he killed them both. Husband is missing. So far seems no one else to suspect. But I wonder about Robb.

THEORIES

Why hanging—have not the slightest idea.

This seems very logical, since the method was the same in both cases.

There are only a few reasons for murder. These two crimes were without doubt premeditated. Revenge seems to be the most probable cause.

On the face of the finding of red paint and a bit of rope in Rand's garage, the chief's viewpoint is rather strong. Some jealous, frenzied person killed them both. But if coroner is correct husband is

hardly the type. Secretary is a puzzle.

(5) Clues—Only the black rope, the red paint in the garage. Some evidence that the woman and her husband were always quarreling. Also evidence that Mason had been seen with her.

(6) Time of death—Some time after midnight. The librarian testified she saw a light at one. Was still on when she went to bed at that hour.

(7) Significant Facts—The woman was wearing a very thin and revealing negligee, yet the chairs in her room seemed to show she talked with the person who killed her.

(8) Her suitcase was packed.

But I wonder if the notebook means a thing and if the black robe does; and if so, are they connected with both of the crimes.

Perhaps between one and two, and, as the murder took place the same night as the other, if the person on the roof is the criminal it would have to be after one; may have been as late as three.

To appear before a man in that scanty garment can mean but one thing. She knew him rather well. Does this point to her husband?

She was going away. No doubt with Mason on his yacht. Also, she was waiting for him to call for her.

REMARKS

Believe that if the husband is not the criminal the murderer will prove to be one emotionally unbalanced individual. One with a perverted streak of abnormality in his make-up. The tarred rope, the red stripes, the black robe, give a hint of this. But I may be wrong.

The grandfather clock in the hallway struck ten while he was writing the last word. Carefully he re-read what

he had written, then, with a little shake of his head, placed the two sheets of paper in a magazine on the table. After all, though he had written down every fact he knew concerning the crime, in print they seemed of little value. The two had been murdered, and that was about all they could say.

For a while he ran over in his mind the testimony at the morning inquest. The chief had allowed only the bare facts to come out. Nothing had been said regarding the furnished room; not a word had been mentioned of the struggle on the roof. If an impression had been made of the foot prints down in the ravine no one had spoken of them. Just the mere fact that Mason had been found dead, hung with a black, crimson-streaked rope, had been given to the jury.

There came a sudden ringing of the doorbell. So unexpected was the sound that he gave a little involuntary start. With a surprised look on his face he rose slowly to go out into the hall. By the closed door he hesitated a second. It seemed rather late for anyone to be calling; then all at once he half laughed. It must be the maid, waiting for him to allow her to enter the house. With this thought in his mind his hand went out for the knob.

With his hand upon the knob he turned to cast a hurried glance down the hall. The only light came from the floor light in the living room. For a second he thought he would turn on the hall light before opening the door. But the bell rang again, a loud, shrill, demanding ring. Turning, he pulled open the door.

For a second as he looked out into the night he could see nothing. Only the dark shadow of the lawn, the black outline of the trees could be seen. Then by his

side he heard a slight sound. He started to turn around, but before he could turn there came the pressure of something being thrust into his side. At the same moment a voice hissed in his ear:

"Turn around and go into the house. One sound and I shoot."

There was nothing to be done. He felt the gun pressing against him, heard the quick breathing of the man he could not see. Turning, he stepped into the hall, heard the man step behind him, followed by the quick slam of the door. As he entered the house, his first thought was not one of fear but of his stupidity in going to the door as he had.

For a second the pressure of the gun against his side vanished, then he felt it shoved against his back. Again the low voice spoke:

"March into the room where the light is and sit in a chair. Raise those hands of yours as high as you can get them."

With his hands above his head, Manners marched into the living room and went across the floor to drop into the first chair he saw. His brain was working rapidly, trying to fathom what it was all about. But it was serious enough, the steady pressure in the middle of his back told that.

As he sank into the chair a hand came stealing across his shoulders to grasp his wrist. The pressure on his back relaxed, as a cord was suddenly dropped over his hands. With a quick pull the slip knot went tight, then the cord was wound again and again. Nor was his assailant gentle. When his hands were tied together the cord

was cutting deep into his flesh with a pressure which was not only painful but one he could not break.

His hands fell into his lap and the man walked in front of him. There was a mask across the face, but Manners could see the eyes which flashed down at him, narrow, vicious looking eyes, with more than a hint of cruelty in them. A fairly well dressed man it was, with big shoulders, wearing a yellow raincoat. There was something familiar about the figure, though he could not say offhand that he recognized him.

Dropping quickly to his knees the man whipped a cord from the raincoat pocket and after winding it a dozen times around Manners' ankles tied it tight. He rose to stand looking down at the figure in the chair. With a significant motion of the gun he spoke; the voice was cold, with a threatening suggestion behind the words:

"Now you are going to talk, and talk quickly. What did you do with that red notebook you took from Mason's pocket?"

Manners gave a little involuntary start. He knew he ought to be afraid, but fear had not entered his mind. Instead he was trying to puzzle out who the masked figure could be. There was something familiar about the man, something in the disguised voice which made him think he had heard it before. For a second he made no reply.

The voice spoke again. This time there was an angry threat in the sneering tone:

"You are going to speak and very quickly. I have no scruples about letting you have this gun. Hurry up and open your mouth."

Manners insisted that he did not know what the

masked figure was talking about. He had taken nothing from Mason's pockets. Had not the slightest knowledge of a red notebook. But the man would not be denied. He insisted that the notebook was somewhere in the house. As Manners shook his head in denial the man took a step forward and raised his hand to bring it slapping down across his cheek.

Manners felt his face flush under the stinging blow. He tried vainly to struggle to his feet, only to be pushed back roughly in the chair. The hand came flashing down on the other cheek, followed by a threatening gesture from the gun. He could see the angry flashing eyes as they gleamed through the mask, narrow eyes without a single spark of mercy in them.

"Come across, now," the voice said. "I know that book has vanished. Where is it?"

Manners slowly shook his head. For a moment speech was impossible. There was but one thought in his mind. He had noticed when he said he did not know anything about the book the man had, for a second, half believed him. One thing was certain, he was not going to tell where it was. His voice came and he managed to put an injured note in the tone:

"I know nothing about a red notebook. I never took a thing from Mason's clothes. Perhaps the man who killed him took it. Maybe the police have it. I don't even know what you are talking about."

There followed a quick retort, but Manners noticed the tone was a little doubtful:

"The police know nothing about it. It's not among the things they have of his at the station. You must have it."

Again came the denial. As he spoke Manners' eyes fell on the clock which stood upon the mantel. It was 10:30. There was no hope until long after twelve. Carter expected him to meet him at the station at that hour. The maid might return soon; but his heart sank; he could expect no aid from her.

The open palm came slapping down again on his face. His cheek burnt from the sting, as his face flushed red from the insult. With the remark that if he tried to move or made a sound, he would get the gun, the man turned to study the room. As his eyes fell upon the desk, he rushed across the room. In a second he was opening drawers, his eager fingers throwing everything on the floor.

Finding nothing the intruder went to the mantel, then came back to stand by Manners' chair. His fingers went exploring through Manners' pockets, brought forth and examined their contents, then threw them on the floor. The table came next; the drawer was pulled out, its surface hastily gone over. Then the masked man turned to gaze at the bound man in the chair. That he was very angry, Manners knew. He glimpsed the flashing gleam of the eyes as they gazed through the mask, saw the hand which was not holding the gun go shut for a second. Then came the rasping voice:

"I am going upstairs. It won't do you any good to yell, for there is no one to hear you. Besides, one yell and I come down, and if I come down it means trouble—a whole lot of trouble. So you be a good boy and keep still."

The gleaming eyes searched Manners' wrists and dropped down to his feet. With a little oath the man

reached down and took the loose end of the cord and tied it to the leg of the heavy table. He paused to give one threatening wave of the gun, then he rushed out of the room.

Manners heard the sound of his hurrying feet as he ran hastily up the steps. From over his head there came faintly to his ears various sounds. They were not hard to interpret. Drawers were being opened, his suitcases searched, clothing gone through. As he thought of what was happening he groaned; there was nothing he could do.

His glance went down to his feet to examine the cord pulled tightly around his ankles. Though it seemed a slight bit of string, yet he knew it was very strong, a fishing line he judged, one which would take a great deal of strength to break. From his ankles it ran over to the leg of the table, where it was knotted in a sailor's knot.

Throwing his feet to one side, he tried to break the string. But the effort was in vain. All he did was to cause the cord to cut into his flesh. As the swift flash of pain went over him he scowled. After all, even if he did succeed in breaking the cord which was around the table leg it would do him no good. And then his eyes fell upon the telephone across the room.

The black enameled instrument stood upon a little stand. If he could only reach it, have time enough to call the police station. From overhead he could still hear the sound of things being thrown upon the floor. If he were only free. And then he had an idea. Tied as he was, with both hands and feet unable to move, he was not helpless, he could still use his arms.

Dropping from the chair, he fell with a bump to the floor. The table was above him; getting to his knees

with difficulty, he placed his weight under its edge and gave a shove with his shoulder. The table moved as he straightened up. Though his wrists were tied tightly, yet he could move his fingers. After several attempts they reached the knot which was around the table leg. In a second he discovered it would be impossible to untie it. But there was one thing he could do. Luckily the leg grew narrower as it reached the floor. In a moment he had slipped the string off the table leg.

Balancing uneasily upon his feet he stood up and waited for a second, listening. Noises still drifted down from overhead. To walk to the telephone was impossible. He might be able to hop in little leaps across the floor but that would take too long; besides he might be heard. There was only one thing to do. Dropping down on the floor he rolled over and over in the direction of the stand.

On reaching it he found it difficult to rise upright, so with a little shove he knocked the stand over. Though it came falling across his body and the telephone banged upon his shoulder, yet it made but little noise. With a half roll he straightened out as his arms went reaching out for the phone. Finding the earpiece, he got it somewhere near his ear as his mouth glued itself to the mouth-piece.

The position was awkward, as the telephone was lying on the floor, but the receiver was off and far away he could hear a distant buzzing. It seemed an eternity before a voice asked "Number?" When it did, he begged the telephone operator to get the police station at once. But it appeared a long time before anyone answered. At length he heard the slow growl of a sleepy voice.

He was afraid to say much or speak loudly, fearing that

at any second he would hear the sound of footsteps upon the stairway. But in a low, quick conversation he begged for aid, told where he was and urged that some men be sent out at once. The voice which had replied had been a little suspicious at first, but when he told where he was the tone changed. With the promise that they would hurry out, Manners heard the receiver go banging down and the line became dead.

A feeling of relief swept over him and for a second he did not stir. Then he got to work. It would not do for the man to come downstairs and find the telephone on the floor. He would notice it as soon as he came into the room. From the sounds overhead Manners knew that every room was being examined. There was but one thing to do—put everything back into place, have the room look as it did when the man hurried out.

It was a task to get the stand upright, but after many attempts Manners accomplished it. To put the telephone back on its top was not so difficult. Then he rolled over the floor until he was back by the chair. After a short struggle he was once more seated in it. Then for the first time he was able to think of what was taking place.

That he had been foolish to go to the door as he had done, there was no doubt. But, after all, how was he to know that when he opened it someone would shove a gun into his side? There was one thing, however, which was now clear. The red notebook contained only two pages of figures, but the book was of value. Perhaps the two or three missing pages would have given the key to its value.

With his head thrown far back he listened. But the man must have left his room and was now searching the

others. For a second he wondered how the police would get into the house when they arrived, and dismissed the thought as another idea came to him, an idea which made him wonder if he would have the time to try it out.

The dog was in the cellar. If he could let the animal up, he would on command, he knew, attack the man who was on the second floor. But two things made him hesitate. It would take some time to reach the cellar door; he would have to roll over the living room floor, go through the dining room, then out to the kitchen. All that would take time. The second thought was the more humanitarian. The dog would of course obey his command, seek out the intruder and give battle. But Manners thought of the wicked looking revolver the man held in his hand, knew that he would of course use it. He loved his dog, took pride in the animal's intelligence, and the thought of the Airedale's being killed was not pleasant. He knew, however, if he could reach the cellar door the dog would die fighting in his defense.

For a few moments he tried to decide what to do. That the man would be angry when he discovered nothing on the second floor, he knew. That he would have no scruples about using the gun when he came downstairs he felt certain. It might be best to try and reach the dog. Then came another thought. He could close the cellar door and crouch down on the first step of the cellar stairs. There might be a chance to do that. Once there, with the big Airedale by his side, the odds would be in his favor.

He made a half move to fall to the floor when there came a sudden quick hiss from the direction of the bow window. Turning his head he glanced across the floor. For a second he could see nothing. The bow window

made a half circle before him, but the long draperies prevented his seeing the windows. As he looked the curtains were pulled aside and to his surprise he saw Carter's anxious face staring at him. For a moment he was too startled to say anything and when he did start to whisper Carter's gesture stopped the words upon his lips. Catching the warning, Manners made a motion of his head; a motion directed toward the second floor. At the same moment he heard the sound of footsteps in the hall overhead, hurrying footsteps, hastening toward the stairway. He leaned forward with the quick whisper:

"He is just starting to come downstairs. He has a gun and—"

The sentence was never completed. Brushing the draperies aside, Carter leaped into the room. As he ran across the floor his eyes met Manners' for an instant and a half smile started to cross his lips. Over the floor he rushed to stand by the door which went into the hall, and Manners saw that his long fingers gripped a gun.

When he reached the door he thrust his head out into the hall, then barked out a sharp command. There came the sound of stumbling feet, feet now running up the stairs, followed by the sharp sudden report of Carter's revolver. Then Manners saw his friend give one running leap out into the hall and heard his footsteps hastening up the stairs.

In his chair, with every nerve tense, he waited for a sound. What Carter was doing back at this early hour he could not understand. Anxiously he listened, heard the sound of footsteps running down the hall over his head; then, a moment later, there came two sharp rapid reports of a gun, followed by silence.

It seemed an endless wait, but Carter at last came through the door. He walked slowly and leisurely as though he had never hastened up the stairway a few moments before. A little smile crossed his lips as he bent down to cut the string around Manners' ankles, then rose and cut the one at his wrists. Slowly shaking his head he gazed soberly at his friend.

"He got away," he announced, "went out over the kitchen roof and dropped to the ground. I think perhaps I hit him with one of the two shots I took. You know I got suspicious when I reached Boston."

There was a questioning look in Manners' eyes, but he did not speak. All at once he felt very tired and his wrists pained from the pressure of the cord.

"You see, Harley," Carter went on, "there was no chief waiting to meet me in Boston. I got Washington on the phone and no telegram had been sent me. Then I grew very suspicious. It's easy enough to sign the chief's name to a message. Everyone knows who heads the secret service. I came to the conclusion that somebody wanted me out of town for the evening. Getting a car I rushed back. I guess I got here in time all right."

His eyes went searching slowly all around the room. Then he asked why the maid had not heard anything. Manners told him the maid had been called out because her mother was sick. The retort which Carter made turned out, after they had interviewed the maid, to be correct. He offered to bet a box of cigars that when the girl reached her home she discovered her mother's health was perfect. Then he wanted to know what had taken place.

He said nothing while the story unfolded. It is true

the demand for the little red notebook caused his eyes to open a little wider, and once or twice he shook his head. When Manners finished he would have spoken if it had not been for the sound of a noisy car in the drive. With the remark: "The police are late as usual," Carter went out into the hall and Manners heard the front door being opened.

Through the open window floated the sound of voices. It was a hurried conversation, and there soon came the loud barking of an engine. The police were leaving. Just as the sound of their car died away Carter came hurrying back into the room. He did not pause, however, crossing over the floor to disappear in the dining room. When he returned he was carrying glasses and a pinch-beck bottle.

As Manners was about to sip his drink, Carter rolled an eye in his direction and then gave a little laugh.

"I have one good bit of news for you," he said. "Forgot to tell you at lunch. It's time we had some help, and it's coming."

Manners had taken his first sip of the smoky flavored Scotch. Something in his friend's voice caused him to place the glass back on the table. He gave him a long look, then asked:

"Who's coming?"

Carter lifted his glass. His eyes watched the straw colored liquid. Raising his glass he drank its contents. Then, with a look at Manners he said:

"Help is on its way. John Bartley will be here by noon to-morrow."

CHAPTER XIII

BREAKFAST was late the next morning. Manners had been awakened by the sound of Carter singing at his bath. It was a grawsome ballad he heard, a sad tale of piracy and violent death. As he listened he wondered where Carter found them all and half thought of suggesting to his friend that he put them into a book. The collection would prove matchless.

After breakfast he strolled out on the lawn. It was a wonderful morning, the air warm, without even the slightest hint of a breeze. Through the trees he could glimpse the sea, its surface a calm mirror of glittering sunlight. Overhead was the blue sky, whose misty softness was unbroken by any cloud.

There was nothing to do, and the water looked inviting. Carter had said he would be busy all morning. Finding the dog he went down to the boathouse and filled the tank of the motor boat with gasoline. A second later he was headed out into the bay.

Past the curving outline of the town he went, then beyond the long point upon which stood the lighthouse. Before him he could see the long stretch of shoreline, which ran for many miles before it lost itself behind the vague outline of a distant point. Far away, almost where the sky and water met, could be seen a ship, its white sails a mere speck in the distance.

The sight of the blue water and the white dashing spray at the bow of the boat filled his heart with peace. For the time being he had but one desire—to sail on beyond the

distant point, then pick up another point and see what lay on the other side. The events of the last few hours were forgotten. The sharp bark of the motor was music to his soul.

It was several hours later when he gave a sudden start and looked at his watch. He was surprised to find how swiftly the time had passed. The boat was fast and he had not been saving of the speed. To his left lay the shore, perhaps three miles away, a shore on which the trees had blended into a narrow line of green. He was many miles away from the cottage. Throwing over the wheel, he swung the boat around in a wide circle and headed back to the town. It was far away, hidden behind the hazy point of land which he could dimly see in the distance. No matter how much speed he used he would be late for lunch.

It was long after one when the boat came to rest in the slip. Hurrying across the lawn with the dog at his heels he hastened up the piazza and into the house. On reaching the living room his headlong rush was halted. Carter was not alone. In the chair by the window sat a distinguished looking man of perhaps fifty.

It was Carter who sprang to his feet as Manners came across the floor.

“Harley,” he said, “this is John Bartley; you have long wanted to meet him.”

It was a keen pair of eyes which smiled a greeting at him and the hand that clasped his own was firm and strong. He started to speak only to have the words stopped by Carter’s laughing comment:

“John, this is Harley Manners, presumed to be a rather well known professor of psychology.”

He threw a humorous glance at his tall friend, then gave a little laugh as he sadly shook his head.

"But I have been rather disappointed in him," he added. "You know he stumbled upon the murder I was telling you about. I expected that a man of his intelligence would give one quick glance around the room, look very wise and say, 'The murder was committed by a bald headed man of sixty, who had two wooden legs. One was of pine and the other of oak. You will recognize him because he carries under his arm a purple cat.' But, do you know, Harley has never done anything of the sort. As a criminal investigator he has been a real disappointment to me. I expected far more than he has shown."

They laughed, and Manners found a chair. Lunch would be served in a few moments he was told. For the time being there was nothing to do but wait. The conversation which he listened to amused him, though he took no part in it himself. Instead, stretched out in his easy chair he studied Bartley.

He had long wished to meet Carter's friend the famous criminal investigator. Many had been the stories he had heard about him, of his skill and keen technical knowledge. Scores of legends had been built up about him. Book collectors spoke with awe of his famous library—wondering at its curious division. Not only did he own the finest collection of original pamphlets and first editions dealing with the eighteenth century of France; but his books upon crime were the most extensive ever brought together under one roof.

Nor was that all. The pamphlets that he had published covered a wide range of subjects, from an almost

unfindable monograph upon Casanova, down to his treatise "Upon Some Rare Poisons." Only a year ago he had published privately the work he had been working upon for the past ten years. "The French Gallante Literature of the Eighteenth Century." Already book collectors were paying a high price for a copy of the work.

And yet as Manners glanced at the well dressed gentleman sitting opposite him, he could hardly believe he was looking at the best known criminal investigator of the country. The eyes which smiled at him had a pleasant gleam behind their grayness. The fine lips were sensitive, the lips of an artist, those of a man whose sympathies could be easily aroused. Culture and breeding were to be seen in every line of the fine face, and the voice which commented upon Carter's ironical sentences was low and musical.

A very likeable man, thought Manners, as he watched him, one you could trust, and a man whose insight into life mingled with his great knowledge ought to be able to steer one through any difficulties. Through the haze of his cigar he watched the newcomer, noticing the long delicate fingers, the quick responsive play of his mobile features; warmed to the happy, kindly smile which played across the intellectual face.

All through lunch Manners studied their guest. Stories of his spectacular success came to his mind. There had been some failures in Bartley's career he knew, but the failures had not been many. Once he smiled as he thought of Bartley's family. It was a famous New England family, which had given scores of clergymen and college professors and a governor or so to the nation's life. And yet this quiet, smiling individual, whose hair was be-

ginning to show streaks of gray, was the best known of those who bore his name.

It was a long, leisurely meal, interesting because of the laughing comments which passed between Carter and his old friend. Over the table hung a friendly atmosphere, made beautiful by the warm sense of close understanding between the two men. When the lunch was over Manners decided it was as pleasant a meal as he had ever had.

Back into the living room they strolled, to light the cigars which Carter had brought out. When the smoke was drifting away to the open window, Carter turned to Manners.

"Harley," he said, "before you came I had been telling John a little about the two murders. I spent more time however in speaking about what took place last night"—he made a little, absurd gesture with his hand—"and do you know, he said we deserved to get into trouble."

"Not exactly that," laughed Bartley. "What I did say was that you should have known something of the kind would take place. You have something here that some individual is after, one who evidently will stop at nothing in his attempt to secure it. You have had one attempted robbery, and you should have recognized what was going to happen last night."

"I don't quite see," began Manners.

"You might have expected that there would be another attempt to enter the house. It would come, naturally enough, quickly. Look at what took place. Carter receives a telegram from his chief, then goes to Boston. The maid tells you that she has received a telephone call saying her mother is ill. May she go and see her? Off

she goes, and that leaves Manners alone in the house. More than that, he even puts his dog down in the cellar. Yet when the doorbell rang, you walked directly to the door—and trouble descended."

Carter's eyes met Manners' as he pulled his face into an expression of what he thought was contrition.

"It does look as though we were dumbbells when we talk about it now," he admitted, "but I was expecting the chief might wish to talk over the report I had sent him." He gave one humorous glance at Manners then shook his head sadly. "But after all there is no excuse for Manners. He is supposed to be a very wise gentleman, and the way he threw his dog down cellar to be certain he would be sitting all alone in the house is the prize bit of wisdom he has shown so far."

They laughed a little, but Manners felt that Bartley's half rebuke had been deserved. It had been a stupid thing not to have made any effort to discover if the maid's mother was really ill. His glance fell upon the bookcase which was across the room. He went over and knelt before it. In a moment he was back with the red notebook in his hand. He presented it to Bartley.

"We cannot understand why anyone should make two attempts to break into the house for this book," he said.

As Bartley's long fingers took it out of the extended hand he raised his eyes to throw an inquiring glance at the professor. In a few words Manners described the struggle on the roof, told how, in his attempts to escape the clutching hands, he had torn loose the pocket.

"And that was in the little inner pocket," broke in Carter. "But Harley gives you the wrong impression. I simply said there was nothing else in any manner con-

nected with the murder in this house. There is nothing in that notebook, however, only a few figures which have no meaning."

Leaning back in his chair, Bartley studied first the red morocco cover. Then his long fingers turned to the inside page. He read the name which was written there, and then turned to the second page. As he studied the line of figures a little smile crossed his lips, a smile which passed away as he raised his head and looked at them.

"Will you bring me a pencil and a piece of paper?" he asked.

Carter brought the pencil and paper from the desk and both men crowded around Bartley. Manners could see he was copying the figures in the notebook. Five lines of figures there were in all, running across the page. As Manners looked at them he could not see that they had any meaning, but when Bartley had finished copying them he spoke:

"I want you to look at the five rows of figures," he said. "But more especially examine the central row, the one I have put down on the paper. Look at the notebook first."

There were the five rows of figures in the notebook, none of them above 1251, and the lowest number was 7. Just a number of figures which crossed the page, apparently without rhyme or reason. For a moment they looked at the page in the notebook, then turned their glance to the sheet of paper upon whose surface Bartley had copied the central row of figures.

There seemed to be no reason why Bartley should have copied them from the notebook. Raising their heads they threw a look at their guest. There was a little amused smile upon his face, as his hand went forth for the paper.

"It is a code," he volunteered, "and a rather simple one. Any person who is familiar with codes would recognize it at once. And it is not actually correct. It is based on the average frequency in which each letter of the alphabet will appear in ten thousand letters of an English text. They use ten thousand as a rule, because a thousand would give us many fractions."

Placing the paper on the desk, he picked up the pencil to use as a pointer.

"There are certain letters," he explained, "which are used many more times than others. E—T—A—O come highest in the list, with Z—Q—X used the least. In a book of a hundred thousand words you will find that the alphabet will all be used a certain number of times. The letter E is the most used letter of all. Now look at these figures; and, when you look, remember that the figures represent simply the number of times on an average a letter would be used, out of ten thousand letters. 950-611-612-1251-1251. You notice there is a period at the end of this group—a sign that a word has been completed. The first two rows of figures on the page and the last two rows mean nothing. They are simply there as a blind. Now as you look over this row, you see that one number is used four times. You find it twice in the first group of figures—the first word. The most used letter of the alphabet, is E."

He laughed.

"To save further words," he went on, "I might as well

admit that I know this code. It's one of fifty which any code expert would recognize at a glance. Remember that the figures represent simply the average number of times certain letters of the alphabet would appear out of ten thousand letters. 1251 represents the letter E."

Again he paused, to continue:

"Let me read that line of figures, substituting letters for the numbers—'Three in side well.' You see the red notebook is important."

Manners shrugged his shoulders. Like everything else it was very simple—after you knew what it meant. But secret codes were something he had never studied, knew nothing about. And unless he had been told the row of figures were a code he would never have had the slightest suspicion they meant anything. But Carter laughed.

"Well," came his retort, "it needed you to recognize that those figures were a code. What 'three in well' means I do not know. But it's my idea that the time has come to amble down to the chief and tell him to put the secretary in a cold dark cell. The colder and damper it is the better I will be pleased. Perhaps he will talk then."

Manners thought of the cold, self-willed face of the secretary. It would take far more than being placed in a cell to make him talk. His eyes fell on the red covered notebook and he gave a little start. A better idea than what Carter had suggested had come to him.

Bartley, observing the look on Manners' face, turned to Carter.

"I think perhaps your friend and I have the same idea," he said. "This man has made two attempts to secure this notebook. Manners told him he had found nothing. He, no doubt, half believes him. Why not

take it down to the chief and drop him a hint? Let him get in touch with the secretary, say about eight. There is a fair chance that, if your chief puts up a good excuse and hands him over the personal effects of Mason, including this among them, something will happen."

"What?"

"Whatever this message in the notebook means, you may be sure it is speaking of something of a fairly high value, something that Robb, I think you said that was the name, wants. Let him go and get it. No doubt it's the first thing he will do after he finds the book. Only, we will be waiting. And when he secures what he is after we will have not only the secretary, but his much desired loot."

"Loot," growled Carter. "One would think you knew what he was after."

"I do not," was the calm answer. "But I have an idea there is a well on the estate of the house you mentioned. And three feet below its surface there is something hidden. Is there a well?"

There was a well. Both Carter and Manners had noticed it. It stood a few feet from the barn, and Carter growled out that he had almost fallen into the thing. It had only a partially rotted cover for protection. But after he had said this he wanted to know what could be hidden down its side.

Bartley laughed as he replied that he did not know. But he did tell them a few facts regarding Mason, which even Carter, who had seen the report of the Department of Justice, did not know. Mason, he informed them, had turned over his fraudulent financial paper to a trickster whose reputation was as bad as his own. He had been

out of the business for the last three weeks. And Bartley had heard several rumors that what he was now engaged in was even more illegal than selling fraudulent securities.

In the end, both Carter and Manners agreed that the suggestion was a good one. They would give the notebook to the chief and he could make some excuse to return it with other personal property of the dead man. Then they would go to the stone house and wait in the expectation that some time that evening Robb would come to take away whatever was hidden in the well.

Deciding to go to the police station at once, they had an argument as to whose car they would take. Bartley insisted that they should ride in his Rolls, and as they climbed into the luxurious coupé, Carter murmured something about the un-American spirit of one who would buy an English machine.

At the police station the officer in the outer room told them the chief was in, but when they entered the room they discovered that he was not alone. Standing before the desk, his pompous voice filling the room, his arm extended in an impressive gesture, was the attorney Manners had seen on the night of the woman's death—Henry Albert.

From the glance Rogan gave when he was introduced to Bartley it was clear that he knew who his guest was. But if he did, his greeting was very simple. He rose to walk around the desk, and shake the hand of the newcomer; then, just mentioning his name, introduced him to the attorney. In a very important manner, Albert extended a flabby hand. As it went reaching out, his rich heavy voice broke the silence.

"I was telling the chief, gentlemen," he said, "just as you entered, that as the chairman of the Good Citizens' League, of the town, I feel that something should be done to restore our unsullied reputation. The two murders have shown us to be a community where vice and sin walk in the darkness."

Into Carter's eye shot an amused gleam, and, as Manners gave him a glance, he saw one eyelid close. The chief had seated himself behind his desk and apparently had not heard the words which had been said. With a sweeping gesture of his hand, the attorney continued:

"Not only as the head of the League do I feel the responsibility, but also in a more personal way. I was the attorney for the murdered woman, had known her for years. I judge, from what I have heard in the last few hours, that she was not a good woman. Her fate ought to be a warning to all who do not keep to the path of rectitude. But I feel, inasmuch as I was trustee for an estate which was left her, a small estate, gentlemen, that I should offer a reward for the discovery of the guilty person. I have just told the chief I will give one thousand dollars when the person who killed her is captured."

He paused, as if expecting to be congratulated for his fine citizenship. But no one spoke for a moment. As Manners looked at the sleek, complacent face, watched the narrow eyes, he concluded that he had not observed so much self-appreciation in many days. Satisfaction oozed from every pore of the big frame.

There came the sound of Bartley's voice, low and pleasant in tone.

"From what you say," he remarked, "you were the attorney for the murdered woman. Did you have any suspicion she was going to leave town?"

A surprised look came into Albert's eyes, and there was a slight hesitancy before he replied:

"I would not say that exactly. She did come into my office the morning before she was killed to ask for a check of three hundred dollars. It was an unusual request, almost all the ready money the estate had. But, of course, I gave it to her. After all, it was hers. But I did have the impression that she was going away for a short while. I don't remember what caused this impression, but such as it was, I had it."

He turned to the chief, picking up his black hat from the desk.

"Remember, Rogan," he said, "I offer a reward of a thousand dollars for the culprit. You might find it does something."

With a bow, he turned to go majestically out through the door. As it closed, Carter gave a little laugh and Rogan took a cigar from his pocket and viciously bit off the end.

"I don't like that bird," he growled. "Never did, never will. He is one of these good boys, never did anything wrong in his life and never will. But he sure gets a kick out of stopping everyone else having a good time. Last year he put up a yell about the ball games on Sunday, got the churches excited. Now he is howling about the bathing suits down on the beach being too short and says they are immoral. The worst of it is, he has lots of jack, lots of importance, big man in the

church and his family has been here forever. Always coming in here and telling me what I must do."

He groaned sadly and at the dismal sound they all laughed. As the laughter died away, Rogan raised his head and gave them a reproachful look, murmuring that they ought to have his job for a while. Then he turned to Bartley.

"I know about you, of course, Mr. Bartley," he said. "When I was in New York, headquarters was always speaking about you. I understand that you have retired, but I wish you could give us a little aid on our two murders. We are getting no place. It is true I have the husband of the woman locked up down in the jail, but—"

"You have—and what has he got to say for himself?" broke in Carter.

"Denies that he killed his wife. Denies he ever owned either a black rope or a can of paint in his life. Said he never had either one in his garage. Admits the woman said she was going to leave him and that they had a quarrel on the night of the murder and that he shook her. Says he rushed out of the house after that. Had a suspicion she was running around with Mason. Says he was at the Wilson house but once in his life and that time was over five years ago. Said he spent the night of the crime at a fishing shack twelve miles down the coast. And simply dares me to prove he was mixed up in the affair. Guess that is about all."

It had been a dry voice which had run off the items, one after another, as if reading from a list. When the unemotional voice had died away, there came another question from Carter:

"Where did you pick him up?"

"Walking up as big as life, to his own front door. He let out some howl when the patrolman brought him down here. And I don't know"—the gray black head was shaken in a questioning gesture—"I don't know. He claims he never knew his wife was dead until I told him. Took the news very hard. But you know he is the only person that had any motive for killing her. And it's my idea he is guilty all right."

No one attempted to argue this question, but in a moment Carter threw the red notebook on the desk, and told the chief what Bartley had said regarding it and what they wished him to do with the book. In his long career upon the police force, Rogan had seen many startling things in his time. The row of figures, the interpretation given them, did not astonish him. With his red face expressionless, he simply gave them a glance, then sat back and silently waited until Carter had finished speaking.

The idea appealed to him. Robb, he informed them, had asked if a red notebook had been found among Mason's possessions. He had replied that he had not seen one. But it would be a very easy matter to fix up a story to tell the secretary. He would inform him that they had found a notebook, found it in an inside pocket. Then he would tell him that he could take away all the personal property that had been found on the body.

Before they left Bartley reminded the chief that he was not to give up the notebook until some time after eight; they would need darkness if their presence at the house was not to be observed, a request to which Rogan simply nodded his assent. Then for a few moments he

talked over the attack which had been made on Manners the night before. As they rose to go the chief followed them to the front door.

Out on the curb, Carter suggested that they walk for a few moments. Down the length of the park they walked and at the end of the square turned to go down a street which wandered away to the water front. Half-way down the block, Carter suddenly clutched Bartley's arm and gave a little shout as he pointed to a gaudy sign.

It stood before a cheap moving picture theater. A very gaudy sign indeed, a poster in vivid red, green and yellow. It showed an impossible horse, rearing on its hind legs, with a dashing cowboy on its back. Behind a building was pictured a desperate looking villain whose revolver was pointed at the daring horseman. It was indeed a very melodramatic poster. They all studied it for a moment, then followed Carter's pointing finger which was directed at the title of the picture, a title which ran in green letters across the flaming poster. "The Silent Horseman," they read.

There came Carter's eager voice, the tone imploring: "All my young and innocent life I have longed to see a silent horseman. Now the desire, repressed for a lifetime, can be gratified. It may make me a better man, release my inhibitions, as Harley would say, and at the cost of ten cents a person. I know you two are high-brows, with silly letters after your names, but a little dissipation ought not to harm you. If you will kindly follow, I will pay the fee and as my guests you may witness this wonderful spectacle."

At the words Bartley broke into a little laugh. For a second they studied the gaudy poster, gave a glance also at the cheap little theater. Then at the same moment they started to walk in the direction of a small window which bore above its glass a sign "Ten Cents."

CHAPTER XIV

DINNER was early that evening and when it was over the time seemed to pass very slowly. Rogan had telephoned that he had gotten in touch with Robb and that the secretary was to come to the station at eight-thirty. Just as soon as the man entered his office a patrolman would call them up and advise them of the fact. It would allow them plenty of time in which to be the first to arrive at the house.

There was a little air of tension over the living room. At least Manners thought so. There was no doubt that the explanation given by Bartley of the row of figures in the notebook was correct, but that the reference to the well could apply to the one they had noticed near the barn he was not so certain. And he wondered if Robb would walk into the trap they were laying.

He was a little nervous and he felt that perhaps Carter shared his feeling. His host was walking up and down the room, pausing every little while to utter some absurd remark. Bartley was seated near the table, with the dog crouched by his chair. Satin had taken an intense liking to the criminal investigator and would not leave his side. Every few moments the animal would thrust his big head into Bartley's lap.

As he walked past the desk, Carter's eyes fell on the dog; he bent down to stroke the brown body, then turned to Bartley.

"John," he said, "Harley claims that this great big

brute can do everything but talk. Boasts that he knows at least sixty words and will follow out commands like a person. Don't you think that while we are waiting for the chief to call us up he ought to put the animal through his stuff?"

It was an agreeable suggestion to Manners for he was proud of the animal's ability. There had been many long hours spent in training the dog. From the very first day he had secured him, he had recognized that the dog had unusual intelligence. Weeks had been spent in teaching him various words and their meaning. Though there had come a point beyond which he could not go, yet the results were astonishing. Sooner or later, his experiments were to be put down in an article.

Rising to his feet he went over to the fireplace. Taking a chair he placed it so that when seated his back would be to the two men and the dog. When Carter wanted to know why he did this, he replied that he did not wish them to think that the dog's actions were caused by any movements which he might make with his hands. Seating himself in the chair he reminded them that the animal could not see his face or his hands. Then he spoke; the voice was low, with each word spoken in the same even tone:

"Satin," he said, "I want you to listen very carefully and do as I command."

At the sound of his name, the dog's head came lifting up as the brown eyes went looking over to the chair by the fireplace. With his head on one side the dog listened.

"Get up, Satin." The animal rose to his feet. "I think you'd better go to the window." At the words, the

dog started slowly across the floor in the direction of the bow window. When he was half way to the draperies the voice came again. "No, stop. You'd better go to the door, and when you get there, lie down on the floor."

At the word "stop" the dog suddenly paused and, with his head on one side, the eyes searching the back of his master, he listened to the low even command. When the voice ceased he turned to go over to the door and with a little sigh sank down upon the floor. Carter started to speak, only to have Manners give another command.

"That is very good, Satin. Now get up, and go over to a corner and sit there with your face to the wall."

The big frame stirred to an upright position and the animal walked over to the nearest corner to press his face against the wall. Not a muscle of his big body moved as he waited for another command.

"Now, Satin, suppose you come over to my chair and put your paw in my lap."

With a leap, the Airedale whirled around, trotting to his master's side. There was a calm dignity in the manner in which the big paw was placed in Manners' lap and his master's hand went sliding across the rough hair. The eyes of both dog and man met as Manners spoke again:

"Go upstairs to my room, find my hat, and bring it down here and then give it to Mr. Carter."

The dog turned to trot out of the room. They heard his heavy feet go lumbering up the stairs. As the sound died away, Carter gave a laugh.

"Let's send the dog out to the well and save ourselves all the excitement."

There was no reply, for the dog was running down the steps to come rushing back into the room. In his big mouth he was carrying a soft hat. As he entered the room he gave a glance at all three men, then, with a little wag of his stumpy tail, he walked over to Carter and waited for the hat to be taken from his mouth. As he waited, Bartley and Carter broke into applause. Manners rose from the chair to walk to the dog's side. Then he spoke.

"After all what you have just seen is merely a matter of training. Dogs are like people. A few are highly intelligent; the mass just average, while many are simply morons, who cannot learn a thing. Satin comes from a strain noted for three things—size, good disposition and high intelligence. You noticed that I never emphasized any particular word. It's the words themselves the dog recognized. Of course, I had to teach him to know a door, a corner, and a window, and what I meant by stop. There are many other words he knows, but what I am going to show you now is the oddest thing of all."

He paused to light a cigarette, then continued.

"This dog is a 'one man animal,' bred with an overwhelming sense of appreciation for his master, but the thing I am going to do, and his reaction, is outside all we know of animal psychology. In a sense any animal trainer will tell you it is impossible. Watch."

He walked over to the chair in which Bartley was sitting. His hand went down upon the shoulder of the gray coat. Then he spoke.

"Satin, this is Mr. Bartley. I want you to protect him. Do not allow anyone to touch him. No biting; just protect him."

At the words, the dog gave his master a searching look from his brown eyes, then walked slowly over the floor to sit at attention before Bartley's chair. Manners took four steps away from the table, then turned to walk back. He made a motion to place his hand on Bartley's shoulder. At the gesture, the animal suddenly jumped up. His upper lip drew back in a snarl; a deep, threatening growl came from his throat. He pushed his big body against Manners, shoving him away from the chair. Again the gesture was repeated and again came the deep low growl as the animal pushed against his owner. Then came the words, "All right, Satin," and the dog moved to one side as Manners' hand came down with a heavy slap on Bartley's shoulder, a slap of which the dog took no notice.

A long low whistle of surprise came from Carter's lips. He started to speak:

"I never saw anything like that, and—"

The telephone broke in on him, a long shrill ring out in the hall. With an expressive look at his two guests, Carter hurried out to answer it. He was back at their side in a moment. His hand flung open the drawer on the table, and found the two automatic revolvers he was seeking. As he handed one to Manners, there came his eager voice:

"That was from the station. The officer said that Robb had just come in, and he has a car outside at the curb. The chief will try to keep him for fifteen minutes, long enough to give us a chance to find a good hiding place. Let's go."

As they hastened from the house the dog tried to go. But it was decided that he should stay behind. Carter

was in command and in a moment had run his coupé from the garage. He vanished for a second to return with a large bundle under his arm, two large stakes, wound around and around with heavy copper wire. As he threw this into the car he gave a sudden chuckle.

"That's an invention of my own," he said. "If it works I am going to take out a patent on it."

It was almost dark. A storm was threatening to come in from sea and the sky was overcast with low, thick clouds. It would be dark earlier than usual, something for which they felt grateful. The wind was commencing to rise and far out over the water echoed the low heavy rumble of thunder. There would be a storm before they got back to the cottage.

Carter had made the plans, telling them he would drive up to the entrance and then try to find a place where the car could not be seen. The darkness ought to hide the machine from any curious eyes. As they swept down the road, he informed them it was his idea that Robb would drive to the clearing in the woods and reach the house by way of the path which crossed the ravine.

Driving off the concrete pavement they ran for about a mile upon a narrow dirt road, then turned to enter the drive. It was fairly dark between the rows of trees and, because the lights of the car were not on, they were unable to see very far. Reaching the high grass on the lawn, they saw the house, a gloomy shadow before them.

Up to the front piazza Carter drove, then turned to go past the house. The grass was tall, swishing above the wheels of the car, but the ground seemed hard. Several hundred yards from the house he turned the machine around until it was headed back in the direction from

which they had just come. Then he stopped. In front of them, an unkempt mixture of vines and shrubbery hid the house from their sight.

They found, in fact, after stepping from the machine, that it was difficult to make out the house. There was little doubt that it would be very dark in a few moments, and unless someone happened to stumble against the machine no one would ever know it was there. Reaching into the car for his bundle of stakes and wire, Carter started through the grass.

They kept a short distance from the house, skirting its side and going in the direction of the barn. Far in the distance could be heard the low rumble of the thunder and once there came a faint flash of lightning. The storm was miles away but the wind was rapidly blowing it in from sea. From the close oppressive feeling in the air, the uneasy silence, it threatened to be a bad storm when it did arrive.

As they came around the rear of the house Bartley wanted to see the well and, after several moments' searching, it was found. The top was protected by a round wooden cover, which Carter had no difficulty in lifting. For a second he turned on his flashlight, as they looked down the deep black shaft; over the moss covered stones the light traveled, revealing nothing of importance.

The well lay between the house and the barn. If anyone came up through the ravine he would have to pass the front of the barn to reach the round, protecting cover. And someone had been there, for the grass was beaten and matted down for some little distance about the well.

The flicker of the flashlight vanished and they were left in darkness. The house and barn were very close

together yet their outlines were hard to distinguish. In a second they were standing beside the little door which opened into the barn. Slipping through they entered the dark silent interior. As their feet pressed upon the first board they heard the mice scurrying to safety overhead. Though it might have been unwise, Carter again turned on his flashlight. The wavering flame went searching over the floor. For a second they saw the row of stalls upon their left, glimpsed the broken down carriage at their right; then darkness came again. As it fell there came Carter's whisper:

"I think we had better go to the front of this building. There are a good many boards off the side and we will be able to look directly out at the well. We won't be able to see much but we ought to hear all we need. If Robb should come don't be surprised if I vanish for a second."

Across the creaking floor they went, to stand by the front wall of the barn. There were many places where the boards had fallen away and the close night air came seeping through the cracks. Manners heard Bartley and Carter move along the wall. Taking the hint he found a place where he could look through the side of the building. With his eyes pressed close against the rough boards he gazed out at the night.

For a few moments he could distinguish nothing. Then as his eyes began to penetrate the darkness he could glimpse the black shadow of the house. The breeze swept across his face and he heard the rumble of thunder, which was coming closer every moment. A firefly, a sudden sparkle of flame, flickered for a second in the yard, then vanished.

As he stood there, Manners began to doubt the wis-

dom of what they had done. The code message might have mentioned a well, but they had no evidence that it was the one a few yards away. The silence was oppressive. Once in a while one of the men would move. Overhead, in the hayloft, he could hear the scampering feet of mice, but the only sound that drifted in from the yard was the rumble of the distant thunder. The moments seemed endless. Time had simply become a part of never ending eternity. If he turned and looked across the barn floor he could see nothing, only a great pit of darkness which seemed to stretch out into space. And out in the yard it was not much better. As the storm crept close around them the darkness seemed to grow more intense.

And then, suddenly, he did hear a sound. Just what it was he could not tell, but it came from the direction of the yard. With his eyes glued against the crack, he tried to pierce the darkness. For a second he saw nothing. Then across his line of vision passed a moving outline, a darker shadow than the night. Someone had crossed the grass. As he saw the passing shadow there came a quick short whisper at his side:

"I am going outside. Don't be disturbed by my going out. I have an idea."

He heard Carter's feet go softly across the floor, listened for a second, then turned to give another glance out at the yard. There came to his straining ears the sound of a scraping object as though something was being moved. Then the darkness was suddenly broken by a flame. By the well he could see the dim crouching figure of a man, see it by the flame of the flashlight the man was carrying.

The pressure of a hand on his shoulder caused him to give a nervous start, but the feeling vanished as Bartley whispered:

"We had better go outside and see if we can get him. The chief must have a car by the drive we came up, by this time, and there was to be another car by the road which led to that clearing. I doubt if he can get away."

As he turned to cross the dark floor, Manners' hand went slipping into his pocket to fumble for the gun. When his fingers clasped the cool surface there came a sense of security. Slowly and carefully he followed Bartley, and as they reached the open air they halted for a second. But it was only for a second. Keeping close to the side of the barn they crept along its side until they could go no further.

In front of them, not over thirty feet away, they could make out the figure of a man. He seemed to be lying flat on the grass, his arms reaching down in the well. As he noticed this, Manners thought they would never have a better opportunity. But even before the thought died away he saw the figure pull itself upright, saw the flame of the torch rest for a wavering second upon a box the man held clasped to his side; then the silence was broken by the sharp command of Bartley:

"Put your hands up. We have you covered."

There came a little gasp from the direction of the well. The light flickered nervously a second only to go out suddenly. There followed the sound of running feet, feet plunging hurriedly around the front of the barn, hastening in the direction of the ravine. In a second they were running after him.

Around the front of the barn they ran, they could make

out the fleeing figure only a little distance in front of them. Manners vaguely wondered why Bartley did not use the gun. Then he remembered that after all it was no crime for a man to take a box from the side of a well. To shoot was impossible. But as he ran he suddenly wondered what had become of Carter.

The man could run; he could see that; with his head bent low, just a dim figure in the ravine. Then something happened. They saw him give a sudden plunge, saw the tall figure go hurling through the air then heard the loud crash as he fell heavily to the ground. At the same instant came Carter's voice out of the darkness: "Look out for the wire!"

A flashlight in Bartley's hand split the gloom. As it wavered over the ground they saw the copper wire running directly across the path between two stakes, thirty feet apart. They knew now why the man had fallen. His hurrying feet had tripped over the wire. Stepping over it they hastened down the side of the ravine.

Half way down its side they found the object they were seeking. He lay stretched silently out on the ground. His head buried in the grass. For a moment as they looked down at the motionless figure Manners thought he had broken his neck. But there came a sudden sigh as the man gave a stir. At the sound and movement Carter dropped down by his side and pulled him over to throw the light upon the white blood-stained face. The eyes, which were slowly opening, were those of the secretary.

It was some time before he fully recovered his faculties. The fall had been a severe one; and, though it was a wonder he had not been killed, yet apparently he had suffered no lasting injuries. The black suit was torn

from the fall; the face was streaked with blood and dirt. Even without the blood which ran from a cut above his eye his face would not have been pleasing.

As he struggled to his feet he threw a scowling, angry glance at the revolver held in Carter's hand. His fists went tight. A look of angry passion flashed across the blood-stained face. The dark eyes gleamed with a sudden rage.

"You have no right to hold me up like this," he snarled.

"Maybe not," agreed Carter pleasantly, "but you notice I am doing that very thing. What is more I expect to keep on doing it until the police arrive."

An anxious expression trembled over the thin lips, only to vanish in an instant. His raging eyes went sweeping up the side of the hill. He gave a start as a voice came yelling down through the darkness:

"We're coming."

Half running, half falling, Rogan, with a policeman behind him, came sliding down the bank. The chief was a little out of breath as his keen eyes went searching over the group. Then one hand slipped into a back pocket to come forth with something which glittered under the glare of the flashlights, an object which also jingled a little as he approached the scowling secretary. As the handcuffs were slipped on his wrists Robb broke into angry, protesting speech.

"You have no right to do this," came the angry sputter, "and if you lock me up in your one horse jail you will suffer for it. You have nothing to hold me on, nothing."

"Just book him down on a charge of assault, breaking and entering; also stick on attempted burglary," snapped out Carter.

Robb's voice died away as he threw a vicious glance at the speaker. The thin lips trembled with rage as his teeth clenched shut. As the chief's hand slapped down on his shoulder, he half started to make some protest, but thought better of it; then, at the sharp command, he started up the bank. Bartley came up the side of the bank. He had left them to go searching through the tall grass. As he came to their side, Manners observed that under his arm was a box, a fairly large box, made of wood, whose cover had been opened. But what it might contain he did not know, nor did Bartley volunteer the information.

They climbed up the side of the ravine, to wait a second while Carter pulled up the two stakes and wound the wire around them. When his task was completed he gave a little chuckle.

"My little contrivance did the trick," he said. "I thought if he tried to run down this path he might stumble and fall over it; and he certainly did."

As they started to walk across the grass to the car, Bartley dryly remarked that it was a wonder the man had not broken his neck. The comment brought no sorrow to Carter's soul. He pleasantly replied that, if he had, he doubted if the loss to the world would be very great.

When they drove out of the driveway, they discovered the chief was to follow them into town. His prisoner was on a back seat, and, as they drove past, Rogan waved a revolver at them by way of greeting. That Robb would manage to escape Manners doubted very much. With the police car several hundred yards in the rear they started down the dirt road.

It had started to rain. In the excitement they had for-

gotten the storm. Now it had swept down upon them. Sharp, jagged streaks of lightning were darting from low hanging clouds. The thunder seemed to surround them. The wind was increasing, blowing in short quick gusts, which caused the car to sway a trifle as it swept around the curves.

Carter did not lose any time. Though the road was commencing to be slippery from the rain, he drove at a rapid pace. Off the dirt road they rushed to follow the concrete which gleamed ahead of their lights. The hedges were but rushing shadows of darkness, broken by flashing views of open driveways. In a very few moments they had reached the cottage.

But Bartley did not allow him to drive the car into the yard. The car, at his request, was stopped just at the entrance of the driveway. Behind them the police machine came to a sudden halt. The chief came hurrying over to them.

"Chief," said Bartley, "put down every charge on the blotter you can think of against Robb. And take this box. Lock it up in a safe place. It's worth quite a lot and perhaps to-morrow we may be able to get at the bottom of this affair. But keep your eye on the box."

All eyes went down to the extended hands. It was not a very large box he was holding, perhaps two feet square. For a moment Rogan made no motion to take it. Instead his questioning eyes went from the box to Bartley's face. Then he reached out a hand.

"What's in the damned thing?"

"Cocaine. I should say about fifty thousand dollars' worth."

CHAPTER XV

By the time they managed to reach the house the storm had broken. Under the sharp jagged streaks of lightning the yard became as light as day. The rumble of the thunder was incessant, long, heavy, booming peals, which threatened never to die away. The rain was sweeping in from the sea, the wind blowing in strong, sudden gusts. Not until they had closed the window did Carter ask Bartley if he had been surprised to discover that the box contained cocaine.

Before replying Bartley took his pipe from his pocket, then slowly patted down the tobacco. When it was drawing to suit him he cast a thoughtful glance at the two men whose chairs had been drawn close to his. A little smile played across his lips.

“Not exactly,” he replied. “You see, Carter, the other night, the head of the narcotic squad happened to be dining with me. We got talking over the fact that the method of bringing drugs into the country changed every few months. No sooner would the government get on to one way, than a new one would creep out. He mentioned the names of a number of men, known to the underworld, who were suspected of being mixed up in the illicit sale of drugs, and Mason’s name was among the ones he mentioned.”

“But, John,” remonstrated Carter, “Mason has been one of the leading fake brokers of the country.”

“All true. But you know that the State of New York

has put out of existence, during the past year, over seventy of those—come on—financial papers. The game has been getting worse, so far as the shysters were concerned. Mason sold out about a month ago. Of course, like all his kind, his money was thrown away, spent like water. The night clubs and the cabarets knew him well. And the inspector told me that he had been seen with several of the people whom they are watching. Men who are mixed up in the drug racket."

Seeing Manners' interest, he went into details. All over the world, he told them, the habit of using drugs had increased. Since the war, the increase in the use of cocaine had surpassed all other habits. London and Paris were centers of the traffic, but few people realized how great a hold it had secured upon America. At times, when the supply was low, cocaine brought as high as four hundred dollars an ounce. A great deal of it came from Germany, South America, and even Switzerland, smuggled in of course, sometimes on ocean liners, often on the rum runners. Every day it crept over the border from Canada and Mexico.

"Of course," he reminded them in a serious voice, "I did not know what was hidden in the well, but recalling the remark of the inspector, I was not surprised at what I found. You must remember that Mason owned a yacht. Carter told me he had had it only a few weeks. It would be very easy to throw, say from a passing liner, a water tight box filled with cocaine, and for Mason's yacht to just happen to be cruising by when it happened. I wager that when you check up on the dates when his yacht left the harbor it will coincide with the time that certain German liners were passing thirty miles out at sea.

Robbs' knowledge of what was being done is interesting."

He was silent a moment, then quietly suggested that they give him all the facts regarding the two murders. It was Carter who told the story. As he was talking Manners rose to his feet and went to his room. He remembered the two lists that he had made, the sheets of paper upon which he had put down his facts and theories. Also he thought of the black robe he had discovered in the barn and the book found in the garage.

Back in the room he waited until Carter's voice had died away then without a word extended the sheets of paper to Bartley. The keen eyes ran quickly down the double columns, the long fingers turning the pages very rapidly. Then, placing the memoranda on the table he gave a questioning look at the black robe Manners was holding. Before the astonished eyes of the two men the professor slipped on the robe. Through the narrow eye-slits he could see Carter's surprised face.

"Good God, Harley," Carter exclaimed, "have you joined the Klan?"

Slipping off the robe he allowed it to fall to the floor as he went into details regarding his visit to the barn. When he had finished Bartley's eyes went from the fabric on the floor to the memoranda on the table. In a second he had picked up the papers and they saw him searching for some item. There was a doubtful look on his fine face as he replaced the papers on the desk.

"Your memoranda are, of course, good. I would say that on the face of what you wrote you might build up two motives for the murders. You can say, of course, that everything points to the woman's husband as being the guilty one. A very plausible theory can be built

around that idea. The crimes are linked together without a doubt. Take for your motive, revenge, injured pride, and you have Rand killing his wife and her paramour. You find a bit of rope in his garage, also a can of red paint. You know that she was about to leave him; she told him that; and that then he quarreled with her. There is one motive, perhaps the strongest we have."

"That's the chief's idea," replied Carter.

"So I judge. But then, you can have another motive and another suspect. Take Robb. Say that he killed Mason in order to secure the cocaine, killed him, perhaps, to secure the notebook which told where the drug was hidden. No doubt a different hiding place was used each time. That gives another motive—money—so you have the two common motives for murder to choose from—revenge and money—take your pick."

"But, Mr. Bartley," came Manners' protest, "that would hardly explain why the woman was killed. Your first theory would explain that, and the average jury would believe it; but how can you bring the woman into the second one?"

"Oh," came the insinuation, "that might not be so hard to do if you are building a theory. Suppose he thought, she would at once suspect him. Go further, say she even had some knowledge that he was the guilty one. Then he would kill her in order to keep her voice still. But"—and he smiled—"but those are only theories and I do not as a rule spend much time over theories. There are two circumstances which must be explained, which do not seem to fit into either theory. Why did the rope have crimson streaks on it? What does the black robe signify? When we ask those two questions we are driven into

another line of thought, into the realm of the science you teach, professor, psychology, and above all, abnormal psychology.

Leaning back in his chair he reminded them that the world was filled with individuals more or less unbalanced, people whose emotions are a prey to complexes and repressions. These are the people who commit horrible crimes, because they have reached the place where they think they are doing the will of God. Others because of some tangle in their sexual make-up become leaders of reform movements, and the world never knows the real reason for their activities. Carter listened with an air that suggested that he did not know what it was all about. At last he burst into speech:

“No doubt it is all true, John, but what are you trying to get at?”

“Simply this:” was the sober reply, “the black rope, the crimson paint, the robe, all make me think that we must ask one very important question: What type of individual would go to the trouble to use these symbolic things? The question as to who committed the murders will be found when you answer that one question.”

He stifled a yawn, glanced at his watch, then rose to his feet. The gesture was not to be misunderstood. Taking the hint Carter also admitted he was tired, and the three men started for their rooms. Seeing Bartley glance at the book under his arm, Manners handed it to him, remarking that it was the one he had found in Rand’s garage, the morning after the man’s wife had been killed. As he said good night he wondered what Bartley would think of the volume he took into his bedroom.

If he had been able to look through the walls what he

would have seen would have given him no information. Not until he was ready for bed did Bartley pick up the paper covered book. The glance he gave the red lettering was just an idle one, but there did come a little start as he read the title. Going over by the window, he sank down in an easy chair, then, for some time, slowly turned the pages.

When he allowed the book to rest in his lap he sat silent awhile. He knew the book, knew a great deal more about it than Manners dreamed. And its discovery presented an interesting problem, a problem which he had been much surprised to meet. When he went to bed, there was a little smile upon his lips as if he had suddenly thought of something of great value.

To the surprise of both Manners and Carter Bartley excused himself directly after breakfast the next morning, saying that he was going into town. He extended no invitation for them to go with him, and as they watched him drive out of the yard they both wondered what he was up to. If they had followed him that morning they would have been more puzzled than ever.

The first thing he did after reaching town was to go to the office of the telegraph company. Here he wrote a long message, in fact, rewrote it several times before it suited him. When he took it to the clerk he inquired how long it took a cable to reach Paris, then carefully added another line to the cablegram. His friend, the head of the French *Sûreté* was a very brilliant man, but he decided that he had better make his communication as clear as possible. The information he was after was important.

His next visit was to the post office where he had no difficulty in seeing the postmaster. But the request which

he made was not allowed until he had mentioned the name of the chief of police. Then the postmaster went to the rear of the building and came back with a letter carrier, a man just about to start upon his morning route.

It was a simple question that Bartley asked. Had the man ever delivered any packages from France to any individual on his route. If so, when, and how many times. The carrier had, many times, he said, small, square packages which had come to a certain individual on his route at very frequent intervals. As the name was spoken Bartley requested both the postmaster and the carrier not to mention his visit to anyone, and, thanking them, left the building.

There was a very curious look on his face as he climbed back in his machine. For a while he did not turn on the power. Instead, leaning back in the seat he sat very still, thinking. There was a little frown between his eyes, a half doubtful expression upon his face. An expression which seemed to hint that he thought what was in his mind was very absurd.

The police station was his next stopping place, and the chief happened to be in. There was a worried look on Rogan's face and Bartley judged that he wondered a little at the visit. In fact Bartley's first question caused the chief's eyes to open in astonishment.

"Since you have been chief, Rogan," he asked, "have there been any other murders in this town?"

Rogan shook his head. His eyes searched the tall well dressed man who had seated himself on one of the rough chairs. There was some purpose back of the question he knew, and he would have given a great deal to know what it was. The second question astonished him even more.

“Any cases of suicide?”

“Just one. Shortly after I came down from the big city and took this job a woman hung herself.”

To the chief’s surprise Bartley was rather keen to know all the details of the woman’s death. Rising, the chief went out to the general room, returning in a few moments with a report. As he reseated himself behind the desk he studied the paper he had brought with him before he spoke.

“The woman was around thirty years of age,” he reported, “an Alice Hart. She had been a stenographer; worked for several lawyers, but her reputation, they say, was none too good. They found her hanging in her room one morning. That is all we have down here about it.”

He wondered why his visitor should be interested in the suicide of a woman who had been dead for some years. But interested he was. The names of the people the girl had worked for went down in a notebook and other questions were asked. Rogan wondered why they were desired. But he asked no questions. He had the profoundest respect for the ability of the quiet gentleman who was sitting in his office. He knew he had some reason for wanting the information.

But when the notebook went back into Bartley’s pocket, the chief spoke of his own troubles. There was a little grin on his face when he mentioned Robb. The man was demanding a lawyer, and the one he desired was a well known criminal lawyer in New York. Also he had a wound on his left shoulder, a flesh wound from a bullet. But just what he should do with him he did not know. He could not keep him locked up many hours without giving him a hearing.

When he arose from the chair to escort Bartley from the room he quite approved of the suggestions he had received:

"Frighten him," he had been told. "Tell him you are going to hold him for the murder of Mason. See if he won't make a deal, tell what he knows about the cocaine. After all, the government man will be down here some time to-day. Remember he is more nervous than you are, Rogan, see if you cannot get him to talk."

When he reached the sidewalk Bartley did not go back to his car. The office he was seeking was only two blocks away in the brick building at the end of the square, not a difficult place to find, for it was the only modern office building in the town. In the corridor he looked at the list on the board for the name he was seeking. After he found it he hesitated a second. After all if he gained the information he was after, the odds were it would be of no value. But he decided to go to the second floor.

The office which he entered was finely furnished. A pert stenographer looked up from her machine to ask in a matter of fact tone his name. When it was given she rose to step through the door, only to return in a moment to say that Mr. Albert would see him. An instant later he was standing in the private office.

That the attorney was much surprised by his visit he could tell from the look he received. The man had risen from his chair and the smooth voice was saying he was glad he had come in, but the look on his face belied his words. Across the heavy features had swept a little astonished expression as though he wondered why he should be disturbed. But though he was astonished he

tried to hide the fact as he motioned for his visitor to take a seat.

That the lawyer did not know of his profession Bartley felt rather certain. When he had been introduced in the chief's office there had been no gleam of recognition in Albert's eyes as his name was spoken. He realized that the man, not knowing who he was, had a right to be surprised at his intrusion. As he looked at the heavy figure lounging back in the chair behind the rosewood desk he noticed the self-satisfaction upon the heavy features. He decided to get his visit over with as soon as possible.

"I have been acquainted with your chief of police for some years," he volunteered. "We were talking over the death of Mrs. Rand and I remembered that you said you had known her for some years. I thought you might have some knowledge of the men she used to go around with."

At his words, Albert turned in his chair and for a moment glanced out of the window. When he turned to face Bartley, though the question must have surprised him, the answer was candor itself.

"In a sense I have known her since she was a little girl. But you understand that you may think you know a person and in the end discover that you did not know them at all. As the attorney for her grandfather's estate I saw her a great deal."

He waved his hand in an expressive gesture. "She was always running in here, after money, bothered me a great deal. The estate was small and complicated. But I fear that my first impressions of her were wrong. I know now, that she must have been a woman who did not keep her marriage vows."

The heavy figure leaned across the desk. As the round face flushed a little with excitement, there came a harsh undercurrent to his voice.

“Women of her type do a great deal of harm, Mr. Bartley. The influence of this sad affair upon young and impressionable people of this town will be evil. They have few enough morals as it is. We find it difficult to try and keep the old-fashioned virtues alive. Our churches even are losing ground. But I can assure you that I did not know of any man she went around with. Though I have heard rumors that there were several, I am sorry to say.”

The excitement died out of his voice as he leaned back in his chair. He became again the perfect picture of ease and satisfaction. There seemed little doubt the lawyer could not tell him the names of any men the woman had known intimately. Bartley rose to his feet. Then he gave a little laugh as he turned to Albert.

“After all that was not the real reason I came in to see you. I understand you have the leading practise in the town and I thought you might give me some information I desired regarding the estate which owns the house in which Mason was murdered. If some money was spent on the place and it could be secured at a reasonable figure it would make a fine summer home.”

At the words a shrewd look passed over the lawyer’s face, a look which Bartley understood after the man had spoken.

“It would, Mr. Bartley,” he said, “and it happens I am the attorney for the estate. Only, I doubt if they would sell. There have been several offers for the place in the last few years. I can, however, write to the parties who

can tell us if they will sell. You know that Mr. Mason thought that he might buy it. I gave him an option on it about a month ago."

"You did," was the slow reply.

"Yes. Just an option, one that would give him the refusal of the place if they decided to sell. There was one letter over the matter. But I will write to George Wilson in Florence and see if he will sell. He might, at that."

There was nothing more that Bartley wished to know, so he excused himself and started to leave the room. The lawyer rose to follow him out to the front office. With one hand on the door, Bartley suddenly paused, turning to make a request:

"Perhaps you would be willing to have your stenographer write down the address of your client. I could also drop him a letter, if you think it would be all right."

The lawyer nodded. Turning to the girl he gave her an address. There came for a moment the noise of the type-writer then she brought the paper upon which she had written to her employer. With a glance at it he handed it to Bartley who bowed and went out into the hall.

Walking back to his car he stood silent a moment then turned to enter the police station again. As he opened the door of the inner office, Rogan's face showed surprise at seeing him again. His hand went out to indicate a chair, but Bartley refused.

"I cannot stay, Rogan, I wanted to ask you a question. It's my impression that the night Mrs. Rand was killed it had been raining, had been a damp foggy night also. Did you find any mud or signs of wet footprints in her house?"

"It was a wet night," was the reply, "but there were no

muddy footprints in the house, not the slightest sign of one or of any dirt. I had the idea that whoever killed her came in a car. Her husband had a cheap machine, but Abigail Tripp, who was snooping all night, never heard a car. So I sort of gave up that idea."

Bartley nodded and asked for an address. When it was given he wished to know how to find the place. Though the chief was curious yet he asked no questions. Instead he told the quickest route to the street he had named.

Ten minutes later found Bartley stopping his car in front of a low rambling brown house. Separated from it by a low hedge, stood a small white cottage, and beyond that was a large imposing white house. They were the three last houses on the street, which ended a few yards beyond the large white mansion, ended at the edge of a heavy wood which stretched away in the distance.

For a while he sat silent, his face thoughtful. Then stepping to the ground he walked a few steps until he stood before the cottage. There was a low fence over which he could glance into the yard. The close cropped grass seemed to interest him, for he studied the lawn for some time. When he turned his eyes away it was to glance back at the brown house, at whose curb his car was standing. With a little shake of his head he then walked slowly to the end of the street.

There was little to see here. The hedge which enclosed the large house was high and he did not seem to care to look through the gate. Instead his eyes went searching across the street. He noticed that he was on top of a high hill, and that below could be seen the roofs of the town. For a time he stood silently thinking; then,

with a very perplexed expression upon his face, walked back to his car. When he reached his machine he turned to go up the path which led to the brown frame house.

The woman who answered the doorbell was far from young, and she gave him a very suspicious, questioning look as she stood holding the door partly open. He could tell that the thin little person whose face twitched as she gazed at him was very nervous, judged that she was going to be nervous for a good many days. The eyes, however, were inquisitive, and the voice which asked him what he wanted trembled a trifle. It would be a good many days before Abigail Tripp recovered all her former insatiable curiosity.

There were few people who could withstand Bartley's smile when he set out to win them. Though later she could not explain why she did so, ten minutes after the door was opened, Abigail Tripp was sitting in her front parlor telling a gentleman she had never seen before in her life of her long vigil at her window that night of the murder. He was a finely dressed gentleman she thought, one who was extremely sympathetic, a man who seemed to see nothing out of the way in the fact that she had spied upon her neighbors. When, because she was out of breath, her thin nervous voice died away, Bartley asked a question:

"Miss Tripp, you say you saw no one out on the street that night, that no one turned in at the gate. Did you hear a car?"

The woman shook her head as she again broke into voluble speech:

"I never saw a soul. Perhaps I should not have looked out of the window. But I did, and that's that. But I

never saw a single person on the street until the next morning. Then it was only the postman, at nine o'clock. He was giving Mr. Albert his mail."

He turned the conversation away from the crime and for a while they spoke of the past glories of the town. With pride in her voice the little faded woman told him that her ancestors had been the first settlers. Then, somehow the conversation came around to some of the old families of the town. Story after story the woman told him. If she had overlooked a single scandal in any of the families she mentioned, he doubted it. Words poured from her mouth like a mountain torrent.

When he rose to go he felt certain that he knew the entire history of the three oldest families of the place, knew all the scandals, all the heroism, all the devotion and the narrowness that will creep out in three hundred years of any family tree. She knew it all. What was more, she was glad to discover someone who would let her talk. It had been a rather extended and decidedly one-sided conversation.

He was in a very thoughtful mood when he climbed into his machine, and it was with him during the ride back to the house. A theory was beginning to form in his mind. He knew that it was an incredible theory, with very little to rest on. So wild, and far fetched was it that he knew that he would have to think it over in solitude. But if he were right it could mean but one astounding thing, a conclusion which seemed so well nigh impossible, so unbelievable that he would not even outline it to Carter. Deep down in his heart he knew he was right, but could he ever prove it?

He was still thoughtful when, upon reaching the house

he found that Carter and Manners were waiting for him. Lunch was ready and after a quick wash he went into the dining room. Both men sensed his mood, and for a time were silent. But silence was not one of Carter's golden virtues. With a long glance at his friend he spoke:

"I presume, John, that your mysterious trip to the town was because you had formed a theory about the murders. We are all ready to hear that they are solved."

Bartley half laughed as he raised his head to glance at his friend's face. Then his voice became serious.

"I have a theory," he admitted, "an incredible one, and if I can establish it, it's my idea it will solve both of the crimes."

But what it was he did not tell them.

CHAPTER XVI

THEY were surprised that evening to receive a visit from Rogan. It was unexpected, for he had not telephoned that he was coming. But after the cigar he had accepted from Carter was lighted they were favored with a long triumphant look. Not only was the round, red face filled with satisfaction, but a little twinkle flickered in his eyes. Taking the cigar from his lips he gave vent to a triumphant chuckle.

"What would you say if I told you I had a new line on those murders?" he inquired.

No one replied, though for a second a startled expression passed over Bartley's face. Well satisfied by the impression he had made, the chief leaned forward in his chair.

"You know I have had my cops digging up some stuff," he went on. "Now they have not picked up very much, but this is a small place. Everybody knows what everyone else is doing. Someone who heard the testimony at the first inquest came into the office this afternoon—and what do you think they said? Told me that the captain of Mason's yacht, that big Dane, who said that Robb did not leave the boat that night, lied. Robb was off the boat and so was the captain."

Carter gave a long low whistle, but there was not time to speak; the chief had a great deal more to say:

"You know this is a pretty one-horse town. I took this job when they offered it to me because I thought there

would not be much to do, and then again, I sort of like the country. But a year ago I got a dictaphone for the station. Never had a chance to use it until last night."

His tone was significant, the voice of a man well pleased with himself. He threw a triumphant glance at Bartley who simply smiled back at him, then he must speak again:

"When I got Robb to the station I thought of that dictaphone. It was my first chance to use it. I kept him under guard in the office for a while and had the thing set up in the cell. I knew he would never expect to find anything like that in a small town. So, when he wanted to see the captain, his name's Johnson, I sent word to the yacht, and soon the big Dane came hustling in. What do you think that dictaphone told me?"

He laughed, well pleased with the recollection of how easily Robb had fallen into the trap. Then he became serious, admitted that what he had heard on the wire did not, in a sense, implicate the two men in the murders, but they both knew about the cocaine. Though from what he had heard, he judged that on the night of the murders they had no real knowledge as to where it was actually hidden. But they knew about the drug and must have shared in the profits.

"Did they give any hint as to how it was smuggled into the country?" Bartley asked.

It had come in from the sea, they were told. Four times the yacht had put out from the harbor, to pick up a little barrel which had been dropped from an ocean liner. They had mentioned this, speaking of another consignment which was expected in a few days. Robb had insisted that the captain must find some excuse to take the yacht out to meet the steamer. Though the chief had

heard nothing else of importance, yet he was well satisfied with what had been divulged.

Just how important the information might be Manners did not know. Bartley's expression gave no hint as to what he was thinking. Leaning back in his chair he was watching the smoke of his pipe curl away to the ceiling. But one thing was true. The dictaphone had furnished the evidence needed to hold the secretary.

"Now I don't know," admitted Rogan, "if what I heard is so very important, I mean if it can allow me to charge Robb with having any knowledge of the murder. I still believe that it was the woman's husband who did her in. But anyway it shows Robb and the captain were mixed up in the drug running. And who knows but what they were mixed up in the murders?"

He shook his head, however, a little doubtfully. He had remembered something:

"If it were not for that rope and the funny spots on it—but when I think of that, I can't see why Robb should go to all that trouble to paint the rope with red spots. That's the odd thing to me."

"Rogan," came Bartley's quiet voice, "and the same question goes for Carter and Manners, when you examined the room in which Mrs. Rand was murdered, did you find any single thing there which seemed out of place?"

Both Carter and Rogan said "No." But Manners was thinking. He could again see the room, recalled the cheap furniture, the gay, gaudy trinkets which covered the dresser, remembered the suitcase filled with flimsy silk garments, pictured the shoes standing in an orderly row on the closet floor. There came to his mind a vision of

the little table with the two cheap magazines on its surface. Then he called to mind something he had temporarily forgotten.

"There was one thing in her room I thought was odd," he said. "Seemed out of place there." As Bartley turned he went on in an apologizing voice: "You see, the room was, to my mind, very typical of a woman who loved pleasure and had very little money or culture. Everything in it—clothes, furniture, everything—was cheap. So I was a little surprised to find a Bible on the table, an open Bible, open as though someone had been reading the book."

His remark amused Carter, who laughed. But Bartley was interested.

"Do you remember the place at which it was open?"

"I have a good memory," Manners replied, "and I looked rather carefully at the place. It was the sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel. There was a red line from the fifteenth verse to the forty-third."

Carter started mockingly to congratulate him upon his memory, but the words ceased when he was asked by Bartley if he happened to have a Bible among his books. With a half bow, Carter rose to his feet and went to one of the bookcases. A second later he had found the book and brought it over to Bartley.

What importance the remark about the Bible could have Manners did not see. He watched Bartley's long fingers turn the pages, saw him find the place he was seeking and for a moment run his eye rapidly over the contents. There was a little smile on his face as he put the limp leather covered book on the table. If they had expected he would tell them what he had discovered they

were disappointed. Instead, he asked the chief a question:

“What are you going to do with Robb?”

“To-morrow morning I am going to have him brought to the office and try and put the fear of God in his soul, inform him I had a dictaphone in his cell, also tell him I am going to hold him as an accessory to Mason’s murder. Then I will hint that if he comes clean on the drug end of it I will do nothing about the murder charge. There will be a couple of Federal men down to-morrow anyway on the drug business, two members of the Government Narcotic Squad.” He paused and a doubtful look crossed his face. “God knows, it’s my idea that Rand bumped off his wife, but I don’t just see how the time limit can be fixed up. That old dame was snooping around all night; she says that there was a light in the woman’s house at one o’clock. She must have been alive then. If the same bird murdered them both, he could not have left the Wilson place until after one. It would be closer to three before he reached Rand’s cottage. Of course the same person may not have committed both murders. But that time element bothers me.”

“It ought not to,” suggested Bartley. “If it were about two when Manners had his battle on the roof, the individual who escaped in the darkness could have reached the cottage around three. Remember that Miss Tripp went to bed at one, no doubt to sleep until morning. She heard no car, but the odds are she would not have been disturbed by one after she went to sleep. Your time limit does not need to bother you, for you have two ways to straighten it out.”

“I only see one.”

"There are two. Remember the blue negligee the woman had on. Either she was sitting up, waiting for Mason to come for her, or else she had gone to bed and when she rose in the morning slipped it on to meet her visitor. Did you find her suitcase all packed when you entered her room?"

Manners had given the suitcase no thought. When he had seen it the dresses and the lingerie had been carelessly thrown over the cover. He was a little surprised to hear the chief admit that the suitcase had been packed when he first entered the room and that the disorder was the fault of the coroner and himself. They had simply thrown everything to one side as they rummaged through it.

"That reminds me," commented Bartley, "that I want to see to-morrow the note you found on Mason's body. I presume you have made an effort to discover who delivered the message which Mrs. Rand must have received the night of the murder. She must have been notified, and no doubt by the murderer himself, that the hour they were to go to the yacht would be much later than originally planned. Mason must have used someone to carry messages to her."

The chief simply nodded and for a time the talk drifted away from the crimes. The conversation which followed covered a great deal of ground. Once, Rogan lamented that he was not in the city. If he were, he told them, he would have fingerprint experts, scientific aid of all sorts. Then he grew reminiscent. Story after story poured from his lips. His long years on the New York City police force had made him not a little cynical. As they listened to his stories, Manners could understand why it was that

Rogan did not have the greatest faith in human nature.

When he rose to go it was Bartley who escorted him to the door. For a few moments they could hear the two men talking in the hall. There would come the low, cultured voice of Carter's friend, interrupted at intervals by a gruff question from the chief. But the words they could not distinguish, and when Bartley returned to the room he said nothing about the subject of the conversation.

When they went to bed Manners took up to his room the Bible Carter had taken from the bookcase. Undressing, he slipped on a lounging robe and, after lighting a cigarette, picked up the book. Ever since he had observed the ironical smile which had passed over Bartley's lips when his eyes had run down the page, he had wanted to read that chapter in Ezekiel. The picture of the book as he had seen it in the woman's room came to his mind. He could still see the red line along many verses.

He realized that he was not as familiar with the Bible as he might be, but after he had read the long chapter of sixty-three verses, he was more bewildered than ever. It was a chapter of prophecy, one in which the writer had predicted the doom of Jerusalem, pictured the once holy city under the symbol of a dissolute woman. The language and the phraseology were, to say the least, he thought, strong, a bitter, angry tirade of burning rage. It was one of the Biblical chapters least read, he imagined.

Running his fingers through his hair, he dropped his eyes again to the small print. A verse leaped out to catch his fancy:

“And I will judge thee as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged, and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy.”

He placed the book upon the table and rose to his feet. With a doubtful shake of his head he went over to the bed. After he had slipped between the sheets he thought for some time of what he had read. He went to sleep with but one conclusion in his mind: not only was it odd to have found the Bible open in the woman's room, but to find it open to that particular chapter was still more strange.

There was a cablegram by Bartley's plate when they went down to breakfast. As he tore open the envelope they noticed that it was a long message, observed also that he was very much interested in its contents. He re-read it several times, eyes grave and serious. Raising his head he saw their interested faces. For a second he glanced back at the cablegram.

"I want to read you a list of books," he said:

"Less Tortures Au Moyen Age"
"Tortures et Supplices en France"
"Oeil pour Oeil"
"Les Crimes de L'Amour"
"Contes du Fouet"
"Sous le Fouet de L'Inquisition"
"Le Procès de Gilles De Rais"
"Justine et Juliette," par De Sade
"Sadisme Sanglant"
"Les Châtiments de Jadis"

He paused, then slowly shook his head. "I have read you only ten out of twenty," he said, "and the ten mildest titles of the lot. But what type individual would you say was importing these books from France?"

Carter assured him he had not the slightest idea what the list could mean. There was a wicked grin on his face

as he reminded Bartley that though he could both read and speak French like a native, yet his taste in literature did not run to the pornographic, a retort which struck Manners as describing the list very accurately.

"In a sense," Bartley admitted, "the list is undoubtedly pornographic. At least two of the books whose titles I read would without a doubt be considered purely pornographic. The others are bad enough, but not actually obscene. But there is one very significant thing about every book on the list, including the titles I did not read."

He paused, as if expecting some comment, but none came.

"The Marquis de Sade may not have been the monster of cruelty which history has pictured; there is some doubt about that; but there is no doubt that every book on this list deals with some form of sadism, some obscene, vicious bypath of human conduct. Three of the books one would expect any specialist, say in literature, or science, to have read, if only to see the type of literature that unbalanced minds can produce. But there is no excuse for an individual collecting all the titles on this list. Most of them are the merest sort of rubbish. The people who wrote them as well as the people who read them are subjects for a pathologist. I can picture very easily the type of an individual who has been buying this sort of thing for two years. A person with a depraved taste, who revels in scenes of bloodshed and cruelty."

He might have said more, but, with a hasty glance at his watch, rose to his feet. Once again he was going to town, and, with an amused smile on his face, informed them he would go alone. They followed him out to the garage to watch him clim'b into his car. As the machine

vanished around the hedge, Carter gave a little shrug of his shoulders and turned to Manners. There was something up, but what it was they would not know until Bartley was willing to let them into the secret.

Yet the first place Bartley stopped at, upon reaching the town, was innocent enough. Inside the modest camera shop he inquired for reading glasses and was very emphatic that he be shown the ones which magnify the most. He tested several before finding the ones which would magnify the most, and even this did not exactly suit him, but it was the best the shop contained.

After that he spent an hour visiting three stationery stores, all the town contained. The first two he entered could not give him what he desired. They were positive in declaring that they had never stocked blue typewriting paper; there was no call for it in the town they said, but the last store brought forth the desired information, that there were at least two people in the town who had ordered such a color.

This was a neat little store which he entered, and an old gentleman came forward to wait on him. He had a small white goatee and his speech was as precise as a college professor's. To Bartley's inquiry the proprietor put his head on one side and slowly nodded. It so happened, he assured his questioner, that he had, a year ago, put in six packages of blue typewriting paper. He still had four in stock; but within the last few weeks he had sold two. Yes, he remembered the names of the individuals to whom he had sold them.

It was a very serious faced gentleman who drove the shining Rolls along the side of the square. Yesterday there had been a wild incredible theory in his mind. Now

the theory was becoming a certainty. It was true, he told himself, that there were still wide gaps in what he was thinking, gaps which perhaps he never could fill satisfactorily. In the main, he knew that he must be right, but he also realized that there was not a jury in the world which would not laugh his theory to scorn.

He went only as far as the door of Rogan's office for the chief rose as he saw him and picked up his hat. He had expected the visit and, with a word to his desk man, went hurrying to the sidewalk. Before getting into the luxurious machine he gave it a long and careful study, then sank down on the seat by Bartley's side. Almost before the car started he began to talk.

He had a good deal to tell, not only were the government men at the station when he reached there that morning, but after one look at Robb the men had recognized him. In their opinion Robb had never been the private secretary to Mason. He was simply the go-between for the drug ring. Not only that; late the previous evening the man had started to cry out for dope.

He got it in the end, but it was not given to him until he had agreed to tell all that he knew. Bartley could picture what had taken place. If Robb was an addict, by the time the government officials arrived he must have been a nervous trembling wreck, a man willing to sell his soul for a few grains of the white crystals which would bring ease to his torment.

But his confession, revealing as it was, did not implicate him in the murders. Mason had bought the yacht and used it to pick up drugs which had been thrown off three liners and had also met one rum runner. Robb confessed that he knew that the drug was hidden some-

where about the old house, but every time it had been hidden in a different place. Mason would hide it himself, then a red notebook would be given to his so-called secretary. The hiding place would be written down in code.

It was Robb who would go to the house, take the drug from its hiding place, and deliver the package to the machine the ring sent down from New York. Just why Mason went to all this trouble the chief did not know. But it seemed certain that the murdered man had not wished to have the drugs on his ship, and perhaps also clear that he did not overtrust Robb. Then the chief said a surprising thing.

Robb had not intended to sail with Mason on the night of the murders. When Mason did not show up at the dock at the appointed hour both the captain and himself became nervous. There was fifty thousand dollars worth of cocaine hidden somewhere around the stone house. Mason had with him the red notebook which he had intended to give Robb when the launch met him at the wharf at ten thirty. But Mason had not showed up and they had tried to find him.

It was not until the next morning that they heard that he had been murdered. They inquired of the police what had been found in his pockets, in fact the chief admitted that he had shown the two men the various articles. But there was no notebook. Yet they knew that it had been in his possession the night before. For some unknown reason Robb had arrived at two conclusions. One was that the two murders had been committed in a wild fury of rage by Robert Rand, the other, that Manners had taken the red notebook. The last belief explained the two attempts to get into Carter's house.

Just as Rogan had finished his tale, the car stopped in front of the white cottage. Next to it was the brown house of Abigail Tripp and on the other side, hidden by the large hedge, could be glimpsed the roof of a large house. Getting out of the machine they pushed open the gate and went up the walk to the piazza. Here Rogan fumbled in his pocket for a key, then finding it, unlocked the door.

It was to the room on the second floor that the chief led Bartley, the room, where only a short time before, he had witnessed a scene which he was still trying to forget. Walking into the bedroom, he made the observation that nothing had been touched, then became silent. Bartley had wished to see the room, giving, as usual, no reasons for his wishes.

As he walked across the threshold, for a moment Bartley stood silent, his glance taking in the sordid contents of the room. Nothing escaped his searching eyes: the cheap little trinkets, the far from costly furniture. The door of the closet directly opposite him was ajar and he could see the bright colored dresses hanging upon the hooks. Then his glance strayed to the table and as he saw the two magazines and the book he walked over towards them.

The Bible he picked up was old and rather worn with use. Like Manners he thought it an odd thing to find in such a room. Opening the book he glanced at the inside cover. There, written in ink which had faded with age, were two lines:

“To Molly, hoping she will be a good girl.
“From MOTHER.”

For a moment he looked at the crooked and faded writing. A little pathetic smile played about his lips. Those lines had been written a good many years ago, written by a hand which had penned the wish every mother has for her child. As he gently closed the book and replaced it on the table there came a kindly thought for the woman to whom the book had been given, all through the years she had kept it.

Though he searched the room carefully, he found nothing of interest. In the end he came back to the stand and looked thoughtfully down at its surface. Just why he did so he hardly knew, but again he picked up the Bible and this time started to turn its pages. He noticed that passage after passage was marked with a red pencil and then he gave a little start. As he turned another page, he saw tucked away between the leaves, a half sheet of blue paper. Glancing at it he raised his head to beckon to the chief, his finger pointing to the paper, where a brief note was typewritten:

"I may be late, maybe as late as two or three. Be ready. If I cannot make it to-night will come for you at dawn."

"Now one gap is filled," was Bartley's short remark.

The chief nodded: "Maybe—but you don't know who wrote those notes. I forgot to tell you we got after all the bell boys at the hotel where Mason was staying. None of them ever brought any notes up here. But a kid they call 'Red Kelly,' who works for the Postal, did. But he says he delivered none on the day of the murder."

"I would be surprised if he had," was the retort. "Mason never wrote that note we just found, though of

course Mrs. Rand thought he did. Also, she never wrote the note you found in Mason's pocket. Did you bring that along?"

Rogan's hand went digging into his pocket to come out first with a cigar case, secondly with a bunch of clippings, and thirdly with a blue sheet of paper. Giving it a glance he handed it to Bartley who, taking it, seated himself by the table and spread the note they had just found and the one given him by Rogan out before him. From his pocket he took the magnifying glass and for some minutes peered through it at the notes. Satisfied, he took a paper from his pocket to compare that with the other two. Then he beckoned to the chief.

"You know, of course, Rogan," he said, "that any expert can tell you if two letters were written on the same typewriter. It's a matter of alignment, the fact that every machine, from the first moment it is used, begins to wear out, though of course it's often necessary to magnify the letters and all that to see the differences in type, and where they are worn. Yet it is not always the case. Look at this—the machine these two letters were written on was a little bit out of alignment. In both notes you will find the letter 'a' is a little bit crooked. The letter 'e' in both notes is worn at the top. The dot over the 'i' is very faint. There is no doubt the same machine wrote both letters. And whoever wrote them did so, first, to have Mason reach the stone house by nine, then to make sure the woman would wait in her home. The murderer of them both wrote these notes."

They argued over the matter all the way back to the police station. Rogan was perfectly willing to agree with what he had seen but there was one complaint in his

plaintive voice. It was all right to say that the murderer had written the two notes, but unless Bartley was willing to agree that the woman's husband was the guilty person, then what he had discovered did not mean anything. And Bartley did not seem very willing to agree with him.

At the police station the car was stopped and Rogan started to leave, but as he was getting out Bartley's hand fell upon his arm to detain him. His voice was very serious as he spoke:

"Chief, you know something of my methods; that several times, in other cases, I have been very certain in my own mind who committed a crime, and yet was not able to prove it legally. You know, I have used, in such cases, certain psychological reactions, allowed the man to convict himself. And I think I know who is guilty in this case."

"The devil you do," was the startled reply. The eyes of the two men met and the chief saw that Bartley was very serious. Behind the dark gray eyes, however, was a look of perfect confidence.

"Yes," was the emphatic answer. "There are a number of things which make me believe I know who committed the murders. I feel very sure of the motive. But, no court would ever believe the theory I have built up. That is why I propose to use a little trickery. You see the murderer has only one thing to wonder about. Every other trail he believes is covered, though later I will show you he is wrong in so thinking; but there is one weak spot in his armor."

"What?" was the eager question.

"Abigail Tripp. Did she see him go into the cottage?" The chief gave him a disgusted look.

"But she said she did not see a soul. Testified that," he growled out.

"Yes, she did," followed the cheerful response. "And that is, of course true, but the guilty individual wonders. She is the only person who had a chance to see anyone go into the house. Suppose she should say now that she did see someone. Or rather, let us suppose the guilty person thought she was going to say that. What would he do, how would he react? Now my proposal is this: The person who killed the man and the woman is, naturally, very nervous. He thinks he has nothing to fear, yet he must be afraid. Suppose you went to him, on some other subject say, and just incidentally mentioned that Abigail Tripp had phoned you she did not tell all the truth at the inquest. That at eight to-night she is coming down to the station to tell you the name of the man she saw, we had better say, very early in the morning, going into the cottage. Then suppose you have both the individual you talked with and Miss Tripp watched. In fact you would have to see that she was protected. It's my idea that the murderer would do something which would give himself away."

A shrewd expression had come into Rogan's face as he listened to the low words of the man at his side. But he was curious.

"Who do you want me to drop that wild yarn to?" he queried.

Bartley bent closer as he whispered in Rogan's ear. At the name the chief's jaw dropped as an incredulous expression swept across his face. He turned to give the calm gentleman beside him a long questioning look, one which told that the chief doubted his own ears.

"No," he gasped. "No, you must be crazy."

"Far from it," was the serious comment. "Just listen to what I have to tell you."

For five minutes the low voice flowed on. At first Rogan listened with the air of a man forced to stand beside a man who he felt had suddenly lost his senses. But as the argument continued, he began to be convinced. The doubtful expression left his face, to be replaced by one of amazement. When Bartley had finished, the chief made no reply for several moments. Then, like a man coming out of a dream, he gave a little shake of his head.

"If it were anyone else than yourself, Bartley, I would think you had been drinking too much of Carter's scotch. But if what you say is so, then I will agree it does look—" He paused, then suddenly gave a short, emphatic oath. "I won't say it looks as if you might have found something. I am willing to say I can't see how you can be wrong. But, God in Heaven, who would have thought it?"

There came another pause in which he gave a long look at the calm individual in the car. The chief knew his record, yet even Bartley's reputation could not overcome his astonishment at what he had been told. With a little shrug of his shoulders he reached for a cigar. Before it was lighted he started to step away from the car. But he turned again to thrust his head into the window of the machine.

"I'll do what you say," he promised, "drop the hint in the ears of the man you mentioned. Will do it around six. Then I will place a watch over both him and that old maid. I think perhaps I had better have her come to

the station anyway. And I will let you know what happens."

He paused to throw a long look at Bartley. Then the red face broke into a doubtful smile.

"But it's God help us both if you are wrong," he ejaculated.

CHAPTER XVII

LUNCH was late that afternoon. When it was over Carter ventured a half hearted suggestion that they might go to the golf club. The fact his proposal did not appear to meet with approval did not bother him. Golf was one of the very few games he hated, no doubt for the physical exertion entailed in walking around the links. As no one showed any enthusiasm over his idea it was decided to stay around the house.

It was a warm afternoon. The heat made them all lazy and after the meal was over they went out into the yard. The dog came running across the grass to greet them, his rough hair gleaming from the water in which he had spent the morning. Under the largest tree, whose shade blotted out the sun, they dragged three chairs. Then each busied himself with the book he had brought from the house.

It was a long silent afternoon though once in a while a car would pass by on the road. An airplane droned its way down the coast, its engine sounding like a huge cricket. Far out in the bay, a white motionless object in the still air, a cat boat was drifting with the tide. Several robins hopped over the grass listlessly, making a half hearted attempt to look for food.

No one spoke for several hours. Carter and Manners were lost in their books and their eyes did not lift above the pages. Bartley had tried to read, but in the end the book fell to the grass, as he leaned back in his chair.

For a time he studied the lawn and thought of the colorful contrast of the red climbing roses against the white paint of the house. Then he closed his eyes and half dozed.

It was Carter who first broke the silence. His eyes came up from the last page of his book to give a glance at his two friends, a look that was not observed. With a little yell he took the book and flung it across the grass, an action that caused the dog to give an astonished look; then he rose and trotted over the lawn and brought it back to Carter. At the sound of his voice both Bartley and Manners roused themselves to attention.

"I have just wasted this beautiful afternoon in reading a mystery story," was Carter's grinning comment, as he fumbled for a cigarette, "and it was not a very good yarn at that. By the time I had reached the last chapter I had not the slightest interest as to who committed the four murders, not the slightest. Anyway, fiction is never as interesting as cold facts. Look at the thing we are mixed up in. Who knows who committed those murders?"

He received a long cold calculating look from Bartley, from whom, for a few seconds, it seemed as though no reply would come. But speak he did at last. And what he said gave Manners an insight as to why the highly educated gentleman by his side had been interested in crime as a life work.

"I suppose, Carter," came the suggestion, "that the reason you were not interested in your book is because mystery stories are all written from one angle. They ask one question—'Who killed the man?'—and that does not happen to be the most interesting part of crime."

"But it's a rather necessary thing for the police to know," was the drawling retort.

"Yes," was the smiling answer, "but it's not the most interesting part of a crime. You know my assistant, Pelt, has fooled around a little in fiction, has written several novels built upon cases we have had, but he always overlooks one thing, as I often tell him. I am not so much interested in who committed the murder as I am in the more important question: 'Why was it committed?' What caused someone to go forth and deal in death? The police solve only a small percentage of all murders committed, because their primary efforts are to try to make whatever clues they discover fit upon a suspected individual. I do just the opposite."

He lighted a cigarette and continued: "I put forth my endeavors to discover why a crime was committed, then I see if I can pick out the type of individual who would be likely to be guilty of such a crime. With me, 'Why?' is more important than 'Who?' at the beginning of an investigation. If we can answer that question, frequently we find that we can be very certain who is guilty, even when it's impossible to prove it from the evidence we have. That often happens."

The argument that ensued was of the greatest interest to Manners. It gave him an insight into the mind of the famous criminologist, made clear why a man of his intellectual leanings could find interest in the sordid things of crime. But as an argument it got nowhere, mostly, because before it was over Carter agreed that his friend's viewpoint was correct.

For some reason, unknown to Carter, Bartley asked if dinner could be served at seven. When, about six, he

rose from his chair and strolled into the house, the eyes of his host followed him until he vanished in the hall. There was something brewing, Carter felt certain. Just what it might be he had not the slightest idea, but it was his impression that long before the evening was over his curiosity would be satisfied.

Dinner was almost over when the telephone rang. The maid hurried out into the hall, returning in a second to come to Bartley's side and whisper in his ear. Excusing himself he hastened from the room. He had been expecting that call for over an hour. As he picked up the receiver he was not surprised to hear the chief's voice, but the tone startled him. It was an anxious, worried voice which came barking over the wire, one containing both dismay and rage, a voice filled with excitement, with the slightest trace of fear behind the eager words.

"That you, Bartley?" snapped out the gruff voice. "Our plan has gone wrong. I did as you said—got hold of the librarian around six, told her I wanted to see her at the station at eight. Also got in touch with the other party and told the story you had fixed up. Did not seem to bother him much. But what do you think has happened?"

The voice spluttered away for a second, then came again; this time it contained a touch of doubt, the tone of a man who was not certain just what had really happened:

"Did just as you said, had a man at her house, rather had him where he could see what happened. And that man stopped in there a little before eight and he has taken her off in his machine. Now what shall we do, and where in the devil do you think they went?"

As he listened to the excited words Bartley's face had grown a little white. For a second he stared at the receiver as though he could see the much disturbed man at the other end of the wire. Then he spoke, his voice sharp and commanding:

"Rogan, it's up to us now; we must act and act fast. We are dealing with an abnormal individual, whose crazed brain will stop at nothing. If we are late we may have another murder on our hands, and we will be the ones to blame. Get your men and start at once for that stone house where they found Mason; it's the natural place for them to go. I will rush out there with Carter and Manners. We won't have much time, if my idea as to what is going to take place out there is correct. If we are too late, then it's going to be very difficult ever to prove anything. The house is the logical place he would go."

"Just a second," the chief requested. "They have at least thirty minutes' start on us. I was not in the station when the cop phoned in. But we will hustle."

For a second, after slamming down the receiver, Bartley stood silent, then he called out the names of his friends as he turned to rush up the stairs to his room. Under the shirts in the drawer lay his gun. By the time he had returned to the first floor Carter and Manners were waiting for him. Their faces were a curious study of surprise and curiosity as they looked at him, but he did not take any time to explain.

"Get a gun and hurry out to the car," he ordered. "Drive to the stone house. Go the quickest way and when you stop the car do it at some distance from the house. Hurry!"

As Carter ran into the living room to take his revolver

from its hiding place, there was but one thing in his mind. He had been right. Something was to take place, and from the stern look on Bartley's face it had already broken. Back in the hall, without stopping for a hat, he followed Bartley out into the yard. It was his own car that he drove out of the garage to sweep an instant later out onto the road.

Dusk had fallen, and because it was the dinner hour the road was almost deserted. Throwing on the power, he let the car out and the machine began to leap ahead. By his side were two silent men. Manners had nothing to say and sat leaning forward wondering what it was all about. Bartley did not try to speak. Explanations could come later, he knew.

They were going sixty-five, with the hedges along the road rushing outlines of green. With a sickening skid the car slid off the concrete as it started to rush over the dirt road which ran by the Wilson estate. In a few moments they had glimpsed the stone wall, just a shadow in the growing darkness. A second later they turned into the tree lined drive.

No sooner had they entered the drive than Bartley's voice ordered a halt. At the command Carter brought the car to a stop, though the house itself was some distance away. As they tumbled forth Manners and Carter turned to Bartley. His face was grave, and they could see that one hand had slipped into his pocket as though searching for something. At the gesture Carter decided he knew what the object was. For a second they stared at him, then Carter burst forth:

"For God's sake, John, tell us what's up. What are we getting into?"

As he started on a half run between the two rows of trees, Bartley, in a few crisp sentences gave them a hint of what he expected to find. He had set a trap for the individual whom he suspected of committing the murders, baited it with the false story that Abigail Tripp had seen someone in the early hours of the morning sneak into the house next door. What was more, he had told this man that she was going to name the person at eight o'clock at the police station. But the man had picked the woman up in his car and disappeared.

The stone house had come into sight. In the gathering darkness it loomed black and gloomy across the high grass. Manners shuddered as he saw it. There was something sinister and creepy about the deserted place. A silence which seemed to hint of threatening disaster pressed around them. The only sounds he could hear were the little patter of the running feet at his side mingled with the grass swishing against their legs as they ran.

At the front of the house they halted. There was nothing to be seen, nothing to break the silence; a curious silence, thought Manners, one which hinted of vicious evil things, a perversity which pressed around them like a thick blanket. Again he shuddered, as he cast a quick glance at the house whose dark gloomy side rose above him. Then suddenly the silence was broken by a shrill, long, wailing cry, the agonized, despairing cry of a terrified woman. It rose upon the still air and trembled for a moment, only to die away as suddenly as it had sounded forth, the cry of a woman deadly afraid.

At the sound, Carter's hand reached forth to fall upon Manners' arm. Manners felt the fingers pressing into his flesh, felt his body tremble, knew that his face had gone

white. He tried to stammer out a sentence, only to be interrupted by Bartley's eager voice:

"You had better go around by the back door, Manners. Carter and I are going in the front door. Whatever is happening will be taking place in the big front room. But remember this, if you have to shoot to save the woman's life, don't hesitate an instant."

Manners watched them as they darted upon the piazza. Then he remembered his instructions. He was to go around the house and come in by the back door. With one hand touching the cold stones for support, he started to hasten along the side of the house. He knew he was afraid. The darkness had never bothered him before in his life, but it did now, a darkness whose enfolding embrace covered everything. The long wailing cry, that cry of a woman deadly afraid, shrieking out for the aid which she must know she could not expect, had unnerved him.

Along the side of the house he hurried, only to stop when his journey was half completed. He had raised his head to notice that he was by a window. Though it was covered with boards, yet a faint light was reflected against a narrow line of the glass. Suddenly he remembered that on the previous day he had wrenched away the lower boards from both windows. The light was coming from the great living room, the room in which he had seen Mason's body hanging to a beam.

The window was low and he was very tall. Standing on tiptoe he gave one quick look through the dirty glass. For a second he was unable to distinguish anything plainly. Then his eyes picked out a candle standing on the floor, close to the center of the room. The yellow

flame flickered and danced as it threw out a little circle of light. And after the glance he forgot he was supposed to go to the back door.

With his white face pressed against the glass he gazed with terrified and astonished eyes into the room. His eyes could not penetrate the great black shadows in the corners, but in the very center was the flickering candle throwing a dancing circle of light. And then he saw an object which was lying on the floor, an object over which the tiny flame danced and played. There, a silent figure in the vast room, lay the motionless body of a woman.

As he saw this his eyes fell upon another object, something which at first he could not understand. He could see the long shadowy outline of a ladder, which ran from the floor to rest upon a beam overhead. For a second he could not believe his eyes; then his glance traveled away from the ladder. He gave a sudden start and the hands which clasped the windowsill were trembling. His throat felt very dry, but his eyes could not take themselves away from the object which dangled from the beam—a long black rope with a sinister noose at its end.

For a moment he could not move, then he started to turn away, but something drew his unwilling eyes back to the window. The candle still flickered upon the floor, but as he looked a black shadow began to creep slowly over the round circle of light. It moved very slowly, blotting out the light as it passed over the dress of the motionless woman, a dark, sinister moving shadow, filled with the threat of coming disaster. Then suddenly there stepped into the circle of the flame a bizarre figure—a man clad in a black, hooded garment.

From head to foot the black robe covered the figure.

It turned toward him and Manners could see the outlines for the eyes, as the figure stood looking down at the motionless woman. There came from behind the grotesque hood the sound of words, indistinguishable words, chanted forth in a wild exultant voice, but what the words were, Manners could not distinguish through the glass. Slowly the figure bent down to sweep the frail body up in his arms. Straightening up the man stood silent for a moment, then moved toward the ladder and, as he moved, one hand reached out for the dangling rope.

Suddenly the feeling of terror left him; Manners' hand went searching for his gun. A feeling of gladness swept over him as he felt its cold surface. It would be a desperate chance but he would take it. As he raised the gun and pressed it against the glass he paused to throw another glance into the room. With the woman in his arms the hooded figure had placed one foot on the first rung of the ladder, a hand was drawing the rope close to her head. Then suddenly, a sharp command rang through the silent room. With a startled leap the hooded figure turned, allowing the woman's body to slip to the floor, and started to run across the circle of light, a circle which he did not cross. The silence was broken by the sharp report of a gun and with his face pressed against the glass Manners saw the hooded figure take a step, sway back and forth for a second, then go plunging down to the floor.

For a moment he was unable to move, then as he heard a car hastening up the drive he turned. The darkness was split by the approaching headlights. He ran around the side of the house, up to the piazza, then in through the open door. Though the hallway was dark, yet from a

door came a light, and he rushed toward it and into the great living room. He found Bartley and Carter bending over the slight body of a woman who lay upon the floor.

Carter's searchlight was playing over the thin white face. For a second he thought she was dead, but even as he looked a sigh came from her lips. He recognized that it was the librarian, whose testimony he had heard in court. The eyes fluttered open, then closed again, then opened. Across her white face swept the most terrified expression Manners had ever observed. She tried to give a frightened glance around the room, but Manners noticed that Bartley placed himself in such a position that she was unable to see, either the ladder or the rope which dangled from the beam. As the trembling lips tried to speak, Bartley bent down and picked her up in his arms as though she were a child, then started to carry her out into the open air.

Just as they reached the piazza the chief came puffing up the steps. As his eyes fell on Bartley he observed the burden he was carrying. He half started to break into speech only to receive a warning gesture. Behind him three policemen were running to his side. As Bartley placed the woman upon the piazza she moaned, then struggled upright to cast a startled, frightened look around her.

"He—he—brought me out here to show me something the police wished me to see—" she stammered out. It was clear that the woman hardly knew what she was saying. Her voice died away, and they saw the thin body shake with fright.

"Then he left me, for a moment or so, and all at once

I turned around—" She gave a little unintelligible cry at the recollection. "I—I turned, and there was a great black figure coming for me, coming slowly across the floor with his big hands out after me. I don't know what happened after that."

The recollection was too much. Leaning against the rail she burst into a wild fit of weeping. Loud hysterical cries came from her lips as her body shook with nervous spasms. Bartley beckoned to the chief and for a few moments they engaged in an earnest conversation. When it was over, Rogan motioned to his policemen, and after a word two of them went over to Miss Tripp and assisted her to the car. They were taking her home. As the sound of the starting car came to their ears, Rogan turned around, his voice was eager as he asked:

"What happened?"

For a moment Bartley was silent. Under the flashlight his face was very grave and a look of sorrow played around his lips.

"Rogan," he said slowly, "when I retired a year ago I took pride in the fact that though in my career I had been in some tight places I had never killed a man. But I just have. Perhaps not a man but a wild dangerous beast. And I have no regrets." He hesitated. "There was little else one could do. It worked out, perhaps not just as we expected, but it proved our theory. He brought the woman out here in order to kill her, to prevent her talking. We arrived in time to prevent another hanging. From what he said as he started to climb up the ladder there is no doubt that the man was not normal. Come."

Into the house they walked. It was a solemn proces-

sion, with Bartley in the lead. In the living room the candle was on the very verge of spluttering out. Great shadows filled the corners, shadows which hinted at mysterious happenings. By the candle light they could see the ladder running to the dark beam above.

But it was not the ladder which received the glow of Carter's flashlight. Instead it rested upon a long black rope which dangled from the beam, a sinister, horrifying object, which swayed a little as the breeze came through the open door, a rope, black in color, but which they all observed was streaked with crimson spots.

For a moment the light rested upon the rope, then swept downward to rest upon the silent figure upon the floor, an object clad in a long black robe whose face was hidden by a grotesque hood, a man who did not move, who showed no alarm at their presence, a weird, bizarre looking object whose black costume added another sinister note to the horror of the room. As they gazed down at the motionless figure they knew the man was dead.

Rogan's heavy frame moved nervously. Suddenly he bent down to sweep the hood away from the covered face. As it fell to one side they pressed close to stand silently looking down upon the still features. It was not a pleasant face they saw, nor was there any hint of nobility of character in it. Death had come so suddenly there had not been time to wipe out the vicious snarling rage which showed in every line. Nothing could wipe out the perverse evil still showing on the face of the man they once had known. There upon the floor at their feet lay the body of Henry Albert.

CHAPTER XVIII

A SINGLE small bulb stood directly above Rogan's desk in the rear room of the police station. It failed completely in its task of illuminating the office, but the dim yellow flame did fall upon the faces of the four men who were seated around the desk of the chief. Silent, sober men they were, whose grave faces were studies of varying expressions.

Behind the littered desk, with a big fat cigar stuck in a corner of his lips sat the chief. Ever since the moment Bartley had whispered the name of Henry Albert in his astonished ears, Rogan had been much worried. He had doubted at the time that one of the leading citizens of the town could be guilty. Even the startling events of the past two hours had not removed a certain amount of anxiety from his mind. Albert was dead—and a great deal of explaining would be necessary. Taking his cigar from his lips he threw a puzzled look in Bartley's direction.

"Your hunch was right," came his slow admission, "but I see trouble ahead, even yet. There will be a big howl when the town hears that Albert is dead. Suppose you put us wise as to how you doped it all out."

There was no reply for a second. Upon Bartley's fine face was a sad expression, one tinged with regret. For a moment his eyes swept over the faces of the three men. He noticed the anxious look of Rogan, observed the bewildered glance with which Manners met his own. Car-

ter, very much undisturbed, was lighting a long thin cigar.

"I suppose," he replied, "the reason I had a far different slant on the murders from the one you men had was due to the fact that I came into the affair after your opinions had become fixed by various circumstances."

Carter made a little gesture of protest, murmuring: "I never had an opinion."

"No doubt that is true," Bartley agreed. "Carter was brought into the case because his friend stumbled upon the first murder. Knowing George rather well, I doubt if he made any serious effort to find a solution. Manners had the solution in his mind all the time. Manners, however, had no experience in the manner in which evidence is collected. As for Rogan, well he did the natural and obvious thing. From the first he started to look for the obvious suspect. In this affair it was of course the woman's husband. The psychological end of the case he overlooked."

The face of the chief flushed as he started to growl out some comment. But a wave of Bartley's hand closed his lips.

"Rogan did the natural and also the right thing. After all, you would not expect him to look behind the obvious motive. Here were all the settings for the sort of crime the readers of our newspapers love—a rich man with a bad reputation, a young and beautiful woman, whose emotions were not fixed in a set morality, a husband who had quarreled with his wife, one who not only knew about her illicit love affair, but also knew that she was going to leave him. On the night of the crimes he vanished. Of course Rogan should have suspected him. Yet after

all, Manners was the only one who had the right slant on the affair and what must have taken place."

The professor slowly shook his head. From the moment he had seen the face of the figure in the black robe, his mind had been a tangle of confused thoughts. Even now he was not certain just what had been behind it all. But he knew that the quiet self-possessed man who had started again to speak, did know.

"When Manners and Carter told me of that sinister black rope and the crimson spots which had been splashed upon it I realized at once that the solution of the crime must be found in the answer to one question! What type of individual would do such a thing? All the settings, the rope, the spots, the black robe of which we heard later, were grotesque fantastic circumstances, which could be explained only upon one assumption, that we were dealing with some unbalanced neurotic, one with a sadistic love of cruelty, who used red as a symbol, used it because the color had some meaning to his disturbed brain."

"That sounds rather silly," was Rogan's sharp retort.

"Perhaps; but it's not silly. There are several books written upon symbolism of colors. Every student of crime knows that the color red crops up often in these weird and unusual murders which are committed by abnormal individuals. The color has both a sexual and a religious significance. Red is the symbol of blood, and you will find it used again and again in the Bible. Many have been the crimes in which the police of both Europe and America have found this color displayed. There was a famous series of robberies several years ago in which no object was stolen unless it was red. There was also a French murderer who killed only red headed women."

The chief gave a half grunt, as if saying that he would believe what he was hearing even though he did have grave doubts that it could be true. But he did not speak, waiting for Bartley to continue.

"The black rope, the crimson spots," Bartley went on, "caused me to think, as Manners had said, that we were dealing with some unbalanced neurotic, someone whose emotions were twisted, either because of a sexual background or a religious one, or, perhaps, both. I knew that if they were just ordinary murders there would have been no crimson spots upon the rope. Then Manners mentioned the book he found in the garage."

Rogan gave a sudden start as he turned a scowling face in the direction of the professor. It was the first he had heard of any book being found in the garage, and at once he wanted to know all about it. At the tone, Manners' face flushed a little, but he allowed Bartley to do the explaining.

"It was discovered in Rand's garage and Manners took it to the cottage with him. Perhaps he made a mistake in not calling your attention to it, but even if he had given it to you, I doubt if it would have made any difference."

However, Rogan insisted upon knowing all about the book. The fact that it was a work dealing with the punishments inflicted upon the early Christians meant little to him. Even the account of the illustrations, pictures which showed the most revolting cruelties, brought no light to his mind. Deep down within his heart he knew that if he had seen the book it would have meant nothing to him. It meant nothing now, for that matter, and he said as much.

"I would hardly expect it would," was Bartley's com-

ment. "After all it is a rare book and of interest to only a few people, but the moment it was shown me I began to wonder. There are only two places in Paris where it can be secured. These two stores do not sell it as a scientific work, a picture of a cruel past. You will find it in their catalogue of pornographic literature, sold to those persons who get some sort of a reaction in reading about scenes of cruelty and bloodshed."

Pausing, he lighted a cigarette, then continued:

"There was one odd fact about this book. The pages had not been cut. That brought up the question: Suppose the book had just been received, could I presume that the owner was the person who committed the murders? Rand could not have owned it, he did not read French. When he said there had never been a piece of black rope or a can of red paint in his garage, if he told the truth, it opened up a very interesting theory."

He threw a grave look at the faces of the three men, and went on:

"The uncut pages were my first clue. The book had come from France. I knew that if I asked at the post office I could discover who had been receiving packages from that country. The carrier upon whose route was Rand's house told me he had delivered many packages from France to a certain individual; in fact, one had been delivered the morning after Mason was found dead. It was my opinion the package was a book."

"But suppose it was," broke in Carter. "What good would that do you?"

"Simply this. The book was delivered that morning, and in the evening it was found in the garage. I knew the individual who had received the volume. Did something

about this book cause him to rush into the garage and leave the rope and the paint behind as a blind? The more I thought it over, the more I became positive I was right. For some reason the book had been left behind, forgotten."

"But, John"—protested Carter—"you can not convict a man of murder, simply because he received a book from France. It simply would not go over—"

"No," was the reply, "but the man did happen to be Henry Albert. My next action was to send a cablegram to my friend, Briffaut, of the French *Sûreté*. I asked him to send me a list of all the books Albert had ordered from Paris in the past year or so. You see I was trying to see if he fitted the type I was searching for—an individual whose mental make-up might lead him to commit such crimes. I received my list. All the books upon it were works dealing with sadism, flagellation, cruelty—all more or less off color, or even obscene, in character, the sort of books an unbalanced individual would delight in reading, because they would whip up his perverted emotions. And so—"

Rogan's hand came banging down upon the desk. His big voice boomed over the small room!

"And that's the bird who was always rushing into the office and wanting to stop something, stop the Sunday baseball games, arrest the girls because the suits they wore on the beach were too short, always butting in and howling about what he called 'evil influences'—"

"Yes," smiled Bartley, "and after all such a condition is not so very uncommon. Well, I had found my individual, one who delighted to read about vicious, evil things, one whose sexual make-up was tangled with his

religious emotions. But could I link him in any way with the crimes? And then I discovered other facts, which made me believe I could. I discovered that Albert not only knew the murdered woman but knew her well. He lived next door to her, and this fact might explain why no mud or footprints were found in her house after the murder. He knew she was about to leave town, and also must have known of her affair with Mason. Later I discovered he did have this knowledge. He was attorney for the estate which owned the stone house. What was more, he had given Mason an option to buy it. On Mason's part this was no doubt a blind. He wanted the place in order to use it as a hiding place for the smuggled drugs, and also for a rendezvous. The last, Albert, without a doubt, knew. Also, the two notes, the one found on Mason's body, the other discovered in the woman's room, were written upon a typewriter in Albert's office."

Carter broke in to ask how Bartley had discovered the last fact. Bartley told of the visit he made to the man's office, how the suggestion that he be given the name and address of the heir to the Wilson estate was met by writing it down upon the office machine. He informed them that only two persons in the town had bought blue type-writing paper within the past few months—Albert and Mason. Then he gave a smile and said:

"But it was Abigail Tripp who made me positive I had discovered the guilty person."

"That old gossip," growled the chief.

"Yes, she is all that, but she did know the family history of all the old settlers of the town. She told me the entire story of Albert's family. It's a rather interesting

study in heredity, and I think explains why it was possible for him to be, on one hand, a leader in the religious and civic life of the town, and at the same time revel in mental pictures of bloodshed and lust."

The story went back to one of the early ancestors of the lawyer. Not only had he been a pirate, but one of the most bloodthirsty wretches who ever sailed under the black flag. In the end the people of New England captured him, and hung his body from the yardarm of his own ship. His record was the wildest and most obscene of his time. One hundred years later, another ancestor also sailed the seas. He traded in slaves, bringing them from the coast of Africa to sell in the markets of the south. And this man's record was one of heartlessness, cruelty and evil.

Abigail Tripp had also known the mother of the lawyer. She had been pictured as a woman who went from a fit of religious emotionalism into a deep depression. She was what the people of her day called "queer." There would be long periods when the woman would be partly out of her mind, times when she raved that God would never forgive her for her sins, but, Bartley informed them, it was to be doubted if the woman had ever done an evil thing in her life.

The three men had listened without saying a word. Perhaps, Manners was the only one who realized just what they were being told. Upon the face of the chief was a perplexed look, as if he were not just sure that what he was hearing was of any importance. How much Carter might suspect, Manners could not tell, for the expression upon the face of his host was one he could not interpret.

"You see," commented Bartley, "to a person interested in heredity, Albert would be a very interesting study. Money came down to him from his ancestors, but they also gave him other things. The evil, vicious strain of his pirate ancestor, the cruelty of his slave-running great grandfather, were in his blood. From his mother would come that heritage of religious emotionalism mingled with an unbalanced tendency to depression which made her what they called 'queer.' So, within his soul, two natures would be at war, the love for cruel, perverse things and his religious tendencies. And at times the evil strains from the past would break forth. Let me picture what I think happened—

"Albert, for years, has been to the townspeople an ideal citizen. Secretly he filled his time reading more or less obscene books which dealt with violent scenes of cruelty. He may have been guilty of other crimes, such as that stenographer who was found hanging in her room some time ago. It is my idea that he of course knew that his client was in love with Mason, knew also of their meeting place. But he desired the woman himself. His unbalanced make-up, in the end, transferred this desire to one of revenge. She became the picture of an evil woman, one who, even if she was removed from this world, would still leave behind her a vicious influence. Perhaps he had an idea that he was in the place of God."

"He was what?" asked the chief in astonishment.

"To his unbalanced mind he stood in the place of God. Did not the Bible say the wicked woman would be thrust from the earth? Did it not speak of bloodshed and punishment? Remember the real reason would be hidden behind a mass of complexes. He heard that she was to

leave town; he hated Mason. At once his rage flamed forth; he wrote the notes. When Mason came to the meeting place, he killed him. Hanging seems to have been an ideal manner of punishment to Albert. To him, it personified, not a crime, but the punishment the law inflicted upon those who do great evil. Later, no doubt early in the morning, he killed the woman, an act of revenge, which he rationalized into a just punishment.

"We must picture his astonishment when Manners blundered into the house. The crime had been discovered. When the police arrived the victim would be at once recognized. Rushing to the great room he removed the body and took it to the roof. For some unknown reason he took the red notebook from Mason's coat and placed it in his own pocket. Just why he did this is not clear, but it happened."

As no one replied, he went on:

"Now, of course, one cannot place oneself in a position to read his perverted mind, but there is no other explanation for the murders. They were the crimes of an unbalanced, abnormal individual, one whose mind took delight in cruel punishment. There is nothing else that will explain what took place. His heredity, the things he read, the symbolism expressed by the rope and the crimson spots, the use of the black gown, all pointed to the fact that my theory was correct, but to prove it was impossible; no jury would ever believe what I had in mind. So I resorted to a trick."

He paused thoughtfully, then continued:

"I had an idea. Only one person could have seen Albert enter the Rand cottage. It was Abigail Tripp. Suppose she were to tell the police this. Suppose Albert

thought she was going to speak to the police. So I had the chief tell the lawyer that, at eight o'clock to-night, the librarian was to come to his office. At that time he would be told the name of the person whom she saw entering the house. And it worked. The man gave himself away, as we know, tried to kill the one person he thought would be a witness against him."

There fell a deep silence over the room. No one spoke, no one seemed to feel like speaking. What Bartley had pictured was very clear in Manners' mind. But there was one thing he could not understand. Why had Bartley fired to kill? And in the end he asked the question.

"For something you did not know, Manners," Bartley replied. "You could not see from the window what we saw from the door. As he dropped the woman on the floor and started to flee, his hand went into his pocket, no doubt for the gun we discovered later. If he had shot Abigail Tripp and reached the open air, there was not a chance in the world by which we could even bring him to court."

"But we knew he was there," broke in the chief.

"Yes, we knew that, but how could we ever prove it? Suppose he shot the woman and reached the open air. All he had to do was throw aside the robe and rush back into the house. He could claim he had left her for a few moments and that he knew nothing about a black robed figure. How could you prove that he did? If he went on trial do you think a jury would place any stock in the obscene books, the long story of his unbalanced ancestors? They would only see the well known citizen, the respected leader in civic affairs. Not a jury in the world

would convict him. And yet we know that he is guilty, because he is dead."

He paused for a second, and when he spoke again his voice was very thoughtful.

"After all, I shot because I saw that hand reaching for the gun, and I have no regrets that my aim was good. No matter what he might have been in the eyes of the town, he was a vicious threat to all that was good. What his unbalanced brain might have done later, in cruelty and evil, if allowed to go free, we can only guess; but, as it is, he is better dead, and by the mere act of his death we can prove that he was guilty of his crimes."

Again the uneasy silence settled upon the room. It was broken by Manners asking a question, one he had wished to have answered for the last hour.

"Why was the Bible open in Mrs. Rand's room. What did it mean?"

He received a long thoughtful look.

"It's my impression," Bartley replied, "that, after Albert had tied the woman's hands, he read that chapter in the Bible before he hung her. It is a violent chapter, one which would, in a sense, in his disordered brain, give justification for what he was going to do. Remember the verse:

" 'I will judge thee as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged. And I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy.'

"And let us be fair, we must not be too harsh in our judgment upon Albert. Some day we shall know what to do with individuals of his type. As it is now, no jury in

the country would have found him anything but sane. But sane he was not. He even got pleasure from the crimes he committed."

Manners gave a little shiver as he thought of the picture Bartley's words had brought up. He could see the woman with her hands tied behind her, waiting a death she could not escape, could almost hear the self-satisfied voice as it read to the helpless victim words of vengeance, which hinted at unspeakable things. His meditation was broken by Carter's voice:

"But why did he use the crimson paint?"

"No one knows. In fact, he himself would not know the reason for most of his actions. Unbalanced impulses drove him to his deeds. And for some reason, the one I mentioned some time ago, red is often used as a symbol of punishment, both human and divine. It's much to be doubted if he knew just why his unbalanced nature drove him to his acts. Life could not have been very happy; remorse at times must have been great. But it's over now, and we ought to be glad."

Silence came again, a silence in which Carter rose and going to the desk reached out for his hat. The chief's eyes saw the gesture and he gave a shrug of his shoulders. Then came the comment:

"It was a queer case."

"Streaked with crimson," was Carter's answer.

THE END

